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**An exploration of the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university**

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King's College London

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**An exploration of the relationship between academics’  
conceptions of their professional identity and their  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis gives an account of an investigation of the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university. It charts the origin of the researcher's interest in this area and locates her within the study. Having established the study's aims and the questions which guided it, the thesis critically examines relevant phenomena, namely the university, identity, research and academic writing. A theoretical perspective is developed and used to underpin an initial conceptual framework. This framework supports a tentative explanation of the connection between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. It is also used to guide the empirical work.

A qualitative research approach is taken to this empirical work. A collaborative research strategy, drawing on narrative and arts-based inquiry, supports the development and presentation of the portraits of seven academics in one School of Education. A critical analysis of emergent themes follows, leading to the proposal of a new conceptual framework.

This new framework is used to explain the variation in academics' capabilities, productivity and dispositions towards academic writing. Differing conceptions of professional identity are offered as an explanation of this variance. Accepting identity as fluid and changing, it is argued that academics' conceptualisation of 'Me as a professional' encompasses a self-view as 'Me as an academic writer'. This self-view is not developed in isolation but in the context of the university and School of Education as organisations.

Within these organisations, academics' ability to be the professional they wish to be is linked to their stores of social and cultural capital and, through this, to their capacity for agential thought and action. It is suggested that the development of an authentic approach to writing, underpinned by a clear moral purpose, is highly significant in the promotion of individuals' positive attitudes and approaches to academic writing.

The thesis concludes with proposals for the development of policy and practice in the particular context of the researcher's School and university and, more tentatively, in the higher education sector.

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## **Abbreviations**

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| BERA  | British Education Research Association           |
| CPD   | Continuing Professional Development              |
| DBIS  | Department for Business, Innovation and Skills   |
| DfES  | Department for Education and Skills              |
| DfE   | Department for Education                         |
| HE    | Higher Education                                 |
| HEFCE | The Higher Education Funding Council for England |
| HEI   | Higher Education Institution                     |
| ITE   | Initial Teacher Education                        |
| MOOCs | Massive open online courses                      |
| RAE   | Research Assessment Exercise                     |
| REF   | Research Excellence Framework                    |

## **Chapter 1**

### **Problematising the relationship between academics' conception of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing**

This first chapter of this thesis begins with an explanation of the origin of my interest in the focus of this study, the relationship between academics' conceptions of their identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a post-1992 university. It moves on to problematise this focus, as I set the study in a particular sector and organisational context and locate myself within it. The chapter then sets up the research questions which guide this study and concludes with an outline of the structure of this thesis.

#### **The 'Clever Room' – the stirrings of a research interest**

I joined my current university mid-career. Having begun my teaching career as an English teacher, I ended this phase of my working life 20 years later as a headteacher of a closing school. I used this formative experience to set up an educational consultancy company, supporting the development of schools in challenging circumstances. Consultancy provided me with the opportunity to put into practice what I had learned as an educational professional. I was secure in my professional identity and felt confident and purposeful. In 2009, I joined a School of Education at a post-1992<sup>1</sup> university and was excited by the opportunity to develop my expertise in a new sector. The first year in my new role proved challenging in unforeseen ways however. I found it difficult to understand how the organisation worked or my

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<sup>1</sup> This term is used to refer to former polytechnics, central institutions or colleges of education which were given university status through the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. Such institutions are also referred to as 'new'.

role within it. The culture of the university, its language and structures were all alien to me. I neither knew what was expected of me nor how to find out. I was now an ‘academic’ and had no idea what that meant. I felt professionally disempowered and unsure of my way forward. I began to write a journal to help me to make sense of my experience, noting down snippets of informal conversation about the academic role. The first entry read:

*Our room is called the ‘Clever Room’. This suggests to me that engaging in academic activity other than teaching and learning is what is seen as clever here.*

(Personal journal, 29 December 2009)

Staff offices in the School of Education are shared, with six or more colleagues working in each room. On arrival, I was allocated a space in a room occupied predominantly by colleagues who published regularly in academic journals. Several colleagues in other offices commented on my location in what was known as the ‘Clever Room’. I wondered what this meant. Further probing revealed that many colleagues appeared to place themselves in one of two camps - those whose focus was undertaking research and producing publishable written outcomes – ‘the clever ones’ – or ‘the others’, who did not publish and who were characterised by their focus on teaching and supporting student learning.

I was unaware of the over-simplification of a complex reality which this easy dualism allowed (Macfarlane, 2015). Nevertheless, this self-identification troubled me. My assumptions about a university’s mission suddenly seemed misguided. I had imagined that, in addition to teaching, universities were centrally concerned with producing and shaping knowledge and that all academic staff would have an active role to play in this through writing and publishing. This did not appear to be the case. Wanting to understand more, I asked a number of colleagues to share their thoughts with me at greater length.

Eight colleagues talked with me further. Many referred to the division between those who published and those who did not. Some saw this division as the result of personal choice and priorities. Others saw it as due to ability: they found writing challenging and needed support to achieve a written product which would fit the demands of academic journals. Most colleagues appeared keen to overcome these difficulties and to become more competent writers. This was a personal aspiration, although many also acknowledged the university's increasingly demanding stance on publication activity. Support from within the School for the development of academic writing was seen to be 'patchy', with more experienced colleagues providing some guidance but there being no discernible whole-School publication, or indeed research leadership, strategy.

The majority of my colleagues did not appear to make a rational choice – to write or not to write – based on the cost-benefit calculation suggested in Hare's (2003) study. Despite seeing the benefits of writing for publication, many believed themselves to be lacking in the skills required. Others appeared to have developed an academic self-view which precluded writing, a position exemplified by one colleague's comment: 'I'm not the sort of person who writes'. This comment was fascinating to me. Its suggestion of the strength of the link between the person we perceive ourselves to be and the academic activities we undertake was pivotal in focusing the study presented in this thesis.

The distinction between 'being' an academic writer and 'doing' academic writing was echoed by other colleagues. Although the nature of the connection between writing and identity was unclear, it appeared central to colleagues' self-perception as an academic, as it was to mine. However, due to my somewhat unusual route into my current university, my experience of academic writing differed sharply from that of my colleagues.

As an independent consultant, I taught on a Master of Education programme in a Russell Group<sup>2</sup> university. Despite my tenuous links to this HEI, my colleagues there made it clear that publishing journal articles was both an expectation and a badge of acceptance as a ‘proper academic’. I therefore published two articles and developed my understanding of the equal value of teaching, research and writing in an academic role. My view of academics, gained from popular literature and television, was confirmed. ‘Proper academics’ were learned dons who spent a considerable proportion of their time creating new knowledge through research, writing and regular publication. An interesting conflation of research and writing occurred in this image of academia. I did not separate the two, seeing writing as the activity of recording the process and product of investigative activity. I did not imagine research as positivistic however, but instead as qualitative and exploratory.

My assumptions around the status of writing were similarly simplistic. My professional life as a teacher and leader in the compulsory school system had focused on writing as a means of communication of learning and ability. Students write their coursework, they write their examination papers; judgements are made about them on the basis of knowledge and understanding conveyed through writing. My experience as a university lecturer did nothing to challenge this assumption. Despite the increasing breadth of assessment modes, written assignments and examinations continue to dominate. An inability to communicate in writing remains a distinct disadvantage during compulsory schooling and beyond. My colleagues’ avowed beliefs around their inability to write at an acceptable level for publication therefore troubled me.

Based on this partial understanding of the situation, I decided to support my colleagues in writing for publication. I also wished to influence the culture and values of the School of Education, as I saw them, by helping to raise the status of

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<sup>2</sup>The Russell Group is a collaboration of 20 of the leading universities in the United Kingdom in terms of research income, learning and teaching and links with business and the public sector.

writing for publication. I worked with a research assistant in the School to develop a writing support programme which comprised:

- skills-based workshops, focused on developing skills such as writing an abstract and constructing an argument;
- a seminar series, providing an opportunity for colleagues to share their developing thinking on their research issue and receive critical feedback;
- a one-to-one mentoring programme, providing personal support on producing an article for publication;
- a weekend writing retreat, providing a space for individuals to meet and write, with mentor support.

Eighty per cent of colleagues in the school accessed some aspect of the writing support programme in its first year.

### **Pointing towards the current study**

We received positive evaluative feedback about the impact of the writing support programme on the development of individual writing skills, with a number of colleagues starting to work on articles for publication. In this, our findings replicated a range of literature which notes the benefits of such interventions on writing activity (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008; Grant & Knowles 2001; Lee & Boud, 2003). However, the programme did not immediately lead to the level of subsequent publication recorded in studies of similar interventions by McGrail et al. (2006) and Keen (2007). Our evaluation of the activities we had undertaken in the course of this programme, and the assumptions which underpinned them (Roberts & Weston, 2013), impacted on the direction of this current study.

The evaluation caused me to reconsider the strength of the apparently easy dichotomy between ‘those who teach and those who research’. Many colleagues

appeared to attribute a high degree of symbolic meaning to the act of publication, seeing it as distinguishing the ‘clever ones’ and as a badge of entry into an alternative professional group. Types of publication were also differentiated, with publications destined for the professional press being accorded less prestige than those for academic journals. I wondered if colleagues were using a simple division between those who research and those who teach as a proxy for more multi-faceted, complex understandings about the nature of an academic identity. An exploration of the complexity of this identity forms a central theme of this thesis.

I similarly began to appreciate my lack of understanding of the writing process. Many writing development approaches have been offered over the last 20 years in a series of attempts to support the development of writing proficiency and practice. Such approaches are exemplified in the work of Boice (1990), Elbow & Belanoff (2000), Dixon (2001), Murray & Moore (2006) and Bolton (2010). Although offering a variety of tools, these approaches share a technicist, training-based methodology. The writing support programme discussed above had indicated the weaknesses of such an approach in effecting sustainable change in my colleagues’ writing patterns, a common issues with such initiatives, as Moore (2003) points out. Viewing writing as a set of technical skills to be mastered, colleagues felt that they were inadequate to the challenge of writing for the type of publication which they believed to be favoured by the university, that is, peer-reviewed journal articles. Our failure to take account of this wider context of writing as a social process in our support programme led to unfinished articles and mutual frustration.

At the same time, I began to find my self-assigned role as academic developer uncomfortable. Studies in the literature illustrate the many reasons why academics avoid writing: writing is difficult and they have no time to overcome the difficulties (Boice & Jones, 1984; Grant & Knowles, 2001), they do not see the point (Lee & Boud, 2003), they don’t believe they can do it (Baldwin & Chandler, 2002), when they do try they get blocked and the publication process is unwieldy and dispiriting (Page-Adams et al., 1995). Drawing on my consultancy experience, I felt I could



support colleagues in overcoming these challenges. However, I did not acknowledge the complexities of this support role and was soon overwhelmed by concerns over the sustainability of my support for individuals and the ethical dilemmas associated with championing identity change. My colonialist attitude in assuming I could import practices into a context of which I had little real knowledge began to worry me. It is argued by Manathunga (2006) that such attitudes are common in academic development work. However, this was not the role I wished to adopt.

Despite these misgivings, colleagues' evaluations of the programme were very positive. Comments around the link between writing and professional identity were now of particular interest to me. Many pointed towards a perceived connection between an understanding of what it is to be an academic and an approach to academic writing.

*I feel stronger as an academic, knowing I have some publications in process that help to define my current fields of interest.*

(Evaluation of the writing support programme - Colleague 44)

*This experience makes me feel like a 'real' academic who thinks about their work and what they will teach as opposed to frantically 'doing' and struggling to meet mindless deadlines.*

(Evaluation of the writing support programme - Colleague 4)

Colleagues' strength of feeling about writing was surprising. I began to understand that the issue of academics' undertaking writing for publication was far more complex than I had imagined. I clearly needed to develop a more critical understanding of writing in context and its impact on the self before I could influence both individual and institutional writing practices. A wish to develop such critical understanding was the impetus for the research presented in this thesis.

## **A study within a context: a post-1992 university**

My research is set in my own School of Education in a university which gained its HEI status in 1992, following political decision-making which led to the rapid expansion of the HE sector. A former technical college and then polytechnic, its original mission was to supply industry with highly qualified engineers, technicians and skilled tradesmen. This economic function was aligned with an intention to offer its students, drawn from schools all over Britain and the world, the opportunity to engage with complex ideas.

My university has retained many elements of this original mission. The Wilson report (2012) underlines the unique contribution which universities can make to national economic and social prosperity, which increasingly rests on a knowledge-based economy. The report's claim that universities can only be truly effective in this role through a close partnership between business and universities has been fully embraced in my institution: we seek to be an internationally-renowned, business-facing university. Despite this strong connection with practice, the development of an exclusive teaching focus is not the strategic intent of the university leadership, who responded negatively to the report from the think tank CentreForum suggesting the separation of HEIs into research institutions, primarily Russell Group universities, and teaching institutions, primarily, the rest (Wyness, 2011). Building on a long-term goal expressed in the university's 2010-15 strategic plan, our new Vice-Chancellor used his first annual staff address to share his aim of broadening the base of research activity across all parts of the university.

The decision to position ourselves as 'business-facing' is partly explained by the long-term sector shift towards a more economic function (Wyness, 2011; Boulton & Lucas, 2008). The publication *Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy* (DBIS, 2009) for example, underlines the imperative for universities to have a national economic impact in addition to their focus on promoting excellent teaching and strengthening research capacity. Universities UK, the representative organisation

of UK universities, takes a similar position, emphasising the position of universities as a core strategic asset to the UK, through their capacity to educate, innovate and make global connections (Universities UK, 2011, 2012). The radical changes to funding UK higher education similarly spotlight the economics of university attendance, as does the discourse around the contested status of students as paying customers (DBIS, 2011). My university's introduction to its statement of graduate attributes, that is, the attributes we wish all of our graduates to have developed whilst studying with us, gives an interesting insight into the university leadership's view of how our university might fulfil this economic impact agenda. The centrality of providing a culturally-rich and research-informed experience is highlighted in this introductory statement. The new Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 retains this focus on research activity as a key lever in achieving the university's aims and strategic intent. In introducing it, our Vice-Chancellor specifically commented on the ability of research to provide the platform for the creation and development of innovative ideas central to our university's growth and reputation.

Research expectations and levels of publication success have historically varied across HEIs. Russell Group universities require research activity for the successful completion of a probationary period, an expectation not always mirrored in the new universities (Murray & Male, 2005). I was not required to publish to achieve full tenure in my current university. Disparities in research productivity are clearly illustrated in the results of the Research Excellence Framework (REF). The REF is a system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. For this purpose, research is defined as 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared' (HEFCE, 2011a:71). Research publications are allocated a star rating by a panel of assessors, based on the publication's originality, significance and rigour. HEI funding bodies use the outcomes of this assessment exercise to inform the allocation of future HEI income; thus a high rating in the REF secures both organisational funding and prestige (HEFCE, 2011b).

In order to understand the importance of the REF for this study, it is important to locate it in the historical context of research assessment exercises. Research assessment in the UK began in 1986, in the wake of growing concern around the lack of HEI accountability for the use of public money. Research assessment fulfilled the growing imperative to evaluate the results, in terms of value for money, gained from the financial support provided for research activity (Otley, 2010).

The awarding of university status to polytechnics in 1992 led to further formalisation of assessment systems to secure transparency across the UK HEI system, with formal Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs) taking place in 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008 (Lucas, 2006). The assessment process retained some common features over this period, such as offering institutions the right to select staff to be submitted, the use of assessment criteria which distinguished between research of national and international quality, and the use of a rating scale to grade work submitted (Otley, 2010). The REF, introduced in 2014, retained these features, although additional emphasis was placed on an assessment of the research environment. The overt assessment of the impact of research was also included.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) (2007) clarified the purpose of UK research assessment exercises as determining research excellence as a funding basis, through a stream-lined, equitable and stable framework which would support UK HE as a world-leading research base. A comparison with the stated purpose of other national research assessment exercises is illuminating. The research assessment exercise in Hong Kong similarly focuses on resource allocation (Wong, 2014), a system mirrored in New Zealand (Wright et al., 2014), whilst in the Netherlands such exercises act primarily as instruments of quality assurance (Hazelkorn, 2015).

New universities in the UK engage less effectively in the REF than their more established counterparts. Although submissions from post-1992 institutions outnumbered those from pre-1992 institutions in the 1996 assessment exercise (Gilroy

& McNamara, 2009), changes in the system meant that by 2001 the proportion submitting from post-1992 HEIs was down by 40 per cent (Gilroy & McNamara, 2009). In the 2013 REF, pre-1992 universities continued to dominate the top rankings (Jump, 2014).

My university wishes to improve our position in these REF rankings. Our performance in the 2013 REF was given a positive slant by our Vice-Chancellor who, in a message to all staff, focused on the gains we had made in world leading research (4 star) and internationally excellent research (3 star), which rose by 11 per cent on the 2008 figures to 57 per cent of the university's research submissions. The number of staff submitting also increased by 30 per cent. However, we slipped down 25 places in the Times Higher REF League table (Jump, 2014). The final sentence in the email to all staff announcing these results underlines the imperative for individuals to develop their research activity:

*I would like to thank everyone for their dedication in achieving these results and encourage you all to redouble your efforts in this critical part of our activity over the coming year.*

(Vice Chancellor's email to all staff – 23 December 2014)

This research focus is a particular challenge for my School of Education: 12 per cent of colleagues within my School submitted publications to the 2008 RAE. This figure puts us below national averages, where one third of academics in Schools of Education are classed as research active (Mills, 2006). In the results league table for units of assessment from my university, colleagues entered for the 2008 RAE received the lowest average ranking across the university (The Guardian, 18 December 2008).

Table 1.1 below illustrates publications as at October 2014 of all academics within the School of Education which have been subject to the peer review process.

| Total number of publications to date | Number of academics with this number of publications to date<br>(Total academics in School = 51) | Percentage of academics with this number of publications (rounded) |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| 0                                    | 29   | 57   |
| 1                                    | 9  | 18   |
| 2                                    | 3  | 6  |
| 3                                    | 2  | 4  |
| 4                                    | 3  | 6  |
| 5                                    | 0  | 0  |
| 6 - 10                               | 2  | 4  |
| 11-20                                | 2  | 4  |
| More than 20                         | 1  | 2  |

**Table 1.1** Publication levels within School of Education as at October 2014: peer reviewed publications

For the 2013 REF, the institutional submission strategy was to submit only research which had the likelihood of being classified as 3 or 4 star. Research was submitted from 13 ‘Units of Assessment’. The School of Education was not one of these units, as we currently do not have adequate research at the higher star levels. The implications of such institutional policy for publication levels and understandings of academic identity are considered later in this thesis.

Table 1.2 shows other writing activity in the School of Education which produced publications which was not peer-reviewed. Overall, 68 per cent of academics within the School of Education have contributed to at least one publication. Detailed past data are not available but the general trend is of increasing writing and publication activity. This mirrors a long-term, national pattern of growing research capacity yet poor submission rates to research assessment exercises across Schools of Education (Oancea, 2010). However, as Christie et al. (2012) point out, the current instability of Schools of Education due to policy changes, the ageing profile of staff and the growing competition from school-led providers of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provides an obstacle to the development of research capacity.

| Type of publication                      | Total number of publications to date | Produced by (number of academics who have contributed to this total number of publications ) | Produced by (percentage of academics) |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Article in professional journal/magazine | 0                                    | 0  | 0                                     |
| Book                                     | 3                                    | 2  | 4                                     |
| Edited book                              | 8                                    | 3  | 6                                     |
| Book chapter in non-refereed book        | 44                                   | 14   | 27                                    |
| Reports                                  | 42                                   | 14   | 27                                    |

**Table 1.2** Publication levels within School of Education as at October 2014: non-peer reviewed

The debate around what counts as valuable research offers some explanation for limited research productivity in Schools of Education. The claim that research assessment quality benchmarks favour the production of Mode 1 – traditional, scientific – knowledge (Nowotny et al., 2003), with practice-based disciplines being penalised for their focus on Mode 2 – dialogic, socially and application-oriented knowledge (HEFCE, 1997), had some past currency. The low value attributed to publications with a professional, developmental rather than knowledge-based purpose (Murray, 2004) was held both to disempower colleagues who did not see their activity as valued by the research community (Houston et al., 2010) and to contribute to teacher educators’ self-view as distanced from the world of research (Griffiths et al., 2010).

The variable use of citation rates to designate research excellence was seen as another indicator of this value-system. Citation rates are used to designate the impact and quality of a piece of research through a formulaic analysis of the number of acknowledgments it has received. Citation rates are not used for the social sciences, however. This could be viewed as a positive, if such mechanistic systems were replaced by more holistic ways of measuring the impact of qualitative studies. However, as discovered in Brew’s (2001b) study of how academics view research,

citation rates tend to be used as an indicator not only of what research is read but of the type of research counted as legitimate.

Despite the persuasiveness of this argument, it is increasingly contestable. The decision to introduce a specific element for assessing the impact of research in the 2013 REF provides one point of challenge. Counting for 20 per cent of the REF assessment, impact case studies, submitted by HEIs, are judged on the social, economic or cultural impact of research or its benefit beyond academia (HEFCE, 2011c). Mode 2 knowledge, with its application orientation, is clearly favoured here.

The submission rate of other HEIs is also instructive. Seventy-six Schools of Education submitted to the 2013 REF. Our four main competitor HEI's were placed substantially higher than my university in the REF tables (Jump, 2014). Moreover, within my university, Nursing, as a unit of assessment, achieved 82 per cent 3 and 4 star submissions. Colleagues within this externally-regulated, practice-based discipline had clearly managed to overcome obstacles faced by the similar discipline of Education and produced high quality research outputs. Education's non-inclusion in the 2013 REF increasingly positions the School, and academics within it, outside organisational norms.

### **The development of my research aim and questions**

The problematising of my initial area of focus described in this chapter led to the development of my research aim and questions which guided my study. The main aim of my research was to explore the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. I intended to use my enhanced understanding of this connection to formulate proposals for the development of policy and practice which may support academics' engagement in the activities of research and academic writing.



My main research question, arising from this aim, is:

What is the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university?

My subsidiary research questions are:

- What meaning do academics in a School of Education in a post-1992 university make of the social world of their university and School of Education?
- How do these academics understand their professional identity?
- What meaning do these academics make of the practices of research and academic writing?
- What influences this meaning-making?

An understanding of the way in which I am interpreting the key terms in my research question is crucial to an appreciation of the design and execution of the research. In summary then, I am using the word 'academics' to refer to teachers or scholars in a university. The term 'teacher educators' is frequently used in the literature. In this study, teacher educators are seen as a sub-set of the more general term, academics. I am using the term 'conception' to refer to the way in which something is perceived or understood. It resonates with my social constructivist perspective of reality as a social construction, with meanings emanating from social interaction and continually revised (Cresswell, 2009), a position which underpins this study. The word 'identity' is used in this thesis to indicate 'an ongoing and dynamic process which entails the making sense and (re)interpretation of one's own values and experiences...' (Flores & Day, 2006:220). 'Professional identity' refers to the way in which an individual makes sense of and (re)interprets their values and experience in their paid occupation; that is, the attitude which individuals bring to their professional role (Evans, 2008). The word 'attitude' refers to a settled way of thinking about something whilst 'approach'

references how this attitude is revealed in practice. ‘Academic writing’ refers to the writing which academics undertake which is predominantly based on research undertaken and which is produced with the intention of publication. I use the term ‘publication’ here to refer to the publishing of an article in a peer-reviewed journal or the publishing of a book chapter, a book or edited book which is research-based. The word ‘relationship’ is used to refer to the connection between professional identity and attitudes and approaches to academic writing.

Some interesting issues are raised through problematising my main research question. The question assumes that colleagues have a view of their professional identity which they are able to articulate in some way. It raises the question of how such an identity might come to be formed and the nature of influences on it. It demands a questioning of what is understood by academic writing and the genesis and nature of the range of attitudes and approaches to it. It assumes a causal relationship between this identity and colleagues’ attitudes and approaches to academic writing which needs to be tested through this study. The question clearly signals the importance of context to the development of research identity and to academic writing. What might be the impact of the professional discipline, the particular university and the wider HE context on professional identity formation and its impact on academic writing? This problematising of my research question guided the boundaries and scope of the literature which I draw upon in subsequent chapters.

My interest in my area of focus, my research aims and subsequent research questions, all arose from my own experience as an academic within the School of Education at my current university. It is to my own place as an academic, researcher and writer within my School that I now turn.

## **Writing myself into the academy**

My entry into the academy was challenging to my sense of professional self. In this, I exemplified the experience of many teacher educators who are de-stabilised by this move (Maguire, 2000; Griffiths et al., 2010). The different organisational structures, rhythms of work and professional expectations of a university demand a re-consideration of the elements which make up a professional self-view, previously grounded in a school teacher role. Many new academics in Schools of Education choose to focus on teaching and supporting the student experience as ballast in their early days in their new role. It is logical, given the primacy of this activity in their former role, that teaching would remain the ‘anchor’ of their professional identity (Murray, 2008:126). However, I followed an alternative route to the development of a new professional identity. Not only a new academic but also a self-appointed academic developer and novice writer, the complexities of my own position impacted on my research aims and design. I explore these positional complexities and, following Patton (2002), use this exploration to authenticate my research.

As a new academic, trying to find her own place in the university, I could be located simply as an insider researcher in this study, a professional carrying out research in my own work setting (Labaree, 2002). Cousin’s (2010) call for the problematising of this neat opposition of insider and outsider resonated with me, however. My position in relation to my research seemed more nuanced than this. From one perspective, I am a member of the community I was studying, living through the story I was researching. I am a new academic who needs to enhance her research profile. However, the fact that I chose to undertake a doctorate itself signals my intent to be different, to position myself as an outsider to many of my colleagues who do not choose to follow this road. My self-assigned role as academic developer is similarly problematic. Following Etherington (2004), I see my interest in supporting the development of others as a logical response to my need to find a recognisable role in a new setting. A development role was a source of approval in a previous post. I sought to be helpful to my colleagues, but my intention was also to help myself to develop a satisfying role in

a new organisation. Through the writing opportunities which this role brought, I was attempting to write my way into the academy.

### **Adopting a reflexive approach**

Given this positional complexity, I needed to adopt an overtly reflexive approach to this study. Reflexivity can be defined as ‘thoughtful, conscious self-awareness’ (Finlay, 2002:532), a process through which we can critique our natural interpretation of life through reference to previous experience (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 1997). Drawing on Macbeth’s (2001) concept of positional reflexivity, I have used the exploration of place, biography, self and other to craft reflexive questions to support my understanding of how my position shaped each stage of the research process. These reflexive questions are: What is my emotional investment in the question? How does this investment affect what I am finding? How does this investment affect my interpretation of what I am finding? This exploration of my positioning forms a central strand of this thesis, offering me a frame for the development of my own identity alongside the central thrust of this study.

As advised by Finlay (2002), I continue to self-consciously analyse my own position in and impact on this research throughout this study, surfacing my own role in the ‘social drama’ (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 1997) of attempting to understand how my colleagues’ conceptions of their professional identity inform their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. I found Wright Mills’ (1978) exhortation that we should use our life experience in our intellectual work helpful in illuminating the impact of me as a person on my research. I also drew on Kolb’s (1984) model of experiential learning to support me in using observations and reflections on my experience to test the applicability of abstract concepts in practice. Thus I interpreted personal experience in the light of theory and vice versa.

This chapter has both traced the development of my interest in the focus of this study and has problematised this focus. It has set my work in the context of a particular post-1992 university and has located me both within this university and within this study. It has set up my research aims and questions. The remainder of this thesis is devoted to an exploration of these questions and to the development of an argument which seeks to explain the connection between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university.

In Chapters 2 to 4, I critically examine the key phenomena relating to my area of focus. Chapter 2 begins this process by critically examining the university. Chapter 3 is devoted to an exploration of the concept of identity whilst Chapter 4 focuses on a critical examination of the concept of academic writing. Chapter 5 summarises my theoretical perspective in a conceptual framework, presenting a tentative theory of the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing, drawing on the more detailed argument proposed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Chapter 6 presents the rationale for the research approach, methodology and methods I used to explore my research question.

An account of the process of data collection and analysis is given in Chapter 7. It establishes the rigour of the research as a process and the weight of the data collected. It sets out my rationale for using individual portraits as an analytical instrument. These individual portraits are presented in Chapter 8, with a commentary which indicates themes arising from the portraits. These themes are explored in Chapter 9, through a critical analysis designed to support my theorising agenda.

In the first part of Chapter 10 I critique my original conceptual framework. In the second part of the chapter I explore how two concepts missing from this conceptual framework - authenticity and moral purpose - can be used to strengthen an explanation of academics' conceptions of the relationship between professional identity and academic writing. The chapter ends with the development of a new conceptual model

based on this re-theorising and a summary of the contribution which this thesis makes to knowledge.

In Chapter 11, I use my new understanding to discuss implications and to formulate tentative proposals for the development of policy and practice which may support academics' engagement in the activities of research and academic writing. Chapter 12 ends the thesis with final reflections on my influence on and learning from this research process, including my view of the strengths and limitations of the study.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Conceptualising the university**

This research focuses on the relationship between the professional identity of academics in a School of Education in a post-1992 university and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. My empirical investigation is informed by a conceptual framework, dimensions of which include the university, identity, research and academic writing. This framework represents a theory of the relationship between these dimensions which is tested and refined through my empirical work. The purpose of this chapter is to critically examine a key dimension of that framework, that of the university.

Following Trowler (2002) I suggest that the identity of the institution in which academics work has a significant influence on their emerging professional identity. An exploration of the changing nature and purpose of the university is therefore central to my developing understanding of the concept of professional identity and its influence on the practices of research and academic writing. The key question which drives the discussion in this chapter is: what is a university for? My purpose here is not to provide a definitive answer to this question. Instead, it is to open out in an exploratory way the idea of a university in order to justify its position as one dimension of my conceptual framework. This in turn allows me to create a terrain, or in Bourdieu's (1997) terms, a field, onto which to map academics' conceptions of higher education and of the university and their relationship with their professional identity and academic writing practices, as revealed through my empirical work. This terrain is commonly summarised by the characterisation of English universities into pre and post-1992 institutions. Such characterisation belies a more complex picture. I point here towards a more nuanced understanding of the complexity and diversity of

English higher education through the introduction of areas of debate explored more fully later in this thesis.

The complexity of the higher education field derives at least in part from its history. The ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge dominated higher education in England until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, providing a liberal education for the elite (Anderson, 2011). The early 19<sup>th</sup> century universities followed to some degree in their wake, retaining a collegial structure. However, the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, civic, redbrick universities adopted a new approach, with a vocational approach pointing towards the needs of industry heavily influencing both structure and curriculum (Scott, 2005). The development of polytechnics and other educational institutions continued this vocational tradition. Despite this growth in the sector, higher education remained essentially the province of the minority. The Robbins report (1963), with its recommendations of sector expansion, disrupted this however and led towards a new era in the structure and reach of higher education.

The move from a binary to a unitary system of higher education in England was formally marked by the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. The Act furnished degree-awarding powers to the polytechnics, together with the designation of ‘university’. A new funding mechanism supported this structural change, with all universities now funded through the HEFCE. A view of the HE system as now fully unitary, even uniform, is misleading however. Indeed, it has been argued that, somewhat paradoxically, that a formal, Government-engendered push for diversification in the system remains (Taylor, 2003). The 2001 HEFCE Strategic Plan, for example, had, as one of its key strategic aims, ‘to maintain and encourage the development of a wide variety of institutions with a diversity of missions’ (HEFCE, 2001:4). This message was underlined in the White Paper ‘The future of Higher Education’ (DfES, 2003) which encouraged HE institutions to both celebrate and highlight individual strengths. This particular form of policy-making was coupled with an emphasis on the economic role of higher education (Brown, 2013) through making its provision subject to the market, with the implied re-designation of students



as consumers and education as a commodity that such a discourse implies (Brown, 2015).

It has been argued that with consumers comes competition, leading to institutions focusing on developing their unique selling point in order to position themselves favourably in the marketplace (Scott, 2005). This belief has been to some extent belied by the actual response of institutions to this policy context. It could be suggested that individual institutions have sought some advantage through emphasising an individualised response to core functions of teaching, research and third stream endeavours. This does not seem to have structural support - HESA (2015) data on the employment function of academic staff in 2013-14 shows only a relatively small percentage of staff to be on either teaching only or research only contracts.

The development of groups which represent ‘types’ of university, for example, the Russell Group, the 94 group, the Million + Group, the University Alliance and the Association of Business Schools, might suggest a comfortable, self-selected internal differentiation (Filippakou et al., 2012). Here, institutions come together with those with a similar academic mission, with the University Alliance for example describing itself as ‘Britain’s universities for cities and regions ‘who ‘aim to make a difference across everything we do’ (<http://www.unialliance.ac.uk/about/>). The importance of rankings in shaping institutional reputation (Hazelkorn, 2015) lends a different perspective to these self-styled grouping however, with alliances being seen as not only different to, but superior or inferior to, others.

The importance of the earlier question posed, that is, what is a university for, becomes evident here. Despite the disparity between universities in terms of their structures and core purposes (Filmer, 1997), an obvious function of all universities remains to educate their students. What is meant by the term ‘educate’ and how the student body is constituted is less straightforward, however. In this chapter, I argue that this educative purpose has been understood, over time, as both preparation of individuals

for occupational roles needed by society or industry and as education in the wider sense of higher learning. Knowledge creation, for its own sake and for society, is another key function of the university, and is, I argue, of central relevance for my purposes of developing an understanding of the relationship between identity and attitudes and approaches to academic writing. An exploration of the university's influence on the development of citizenship and the reproduction of the social order is similarly important, given my interest in writing as a social process and a potential instrument of inequality.

### **Education for employment**

The primacy of education as a key function of the university was established in the middle ages, where such education focused on the development of theologians, doctors of medicine and lawyers (Hamlyn, 1996). As previously noted, Britain's first universities, Oxford and Cambridge, aimed to produce servants of the church and state who were, additionally, men of culture rather than necessarily of intellect (Ashby, 1967). A university education focused not simply on the development of intellectual acumen but also on the development of refined individuals fit to serve their country. This mission guided the academy for 600 years, both in Britain and later in America, where early universities modelled themselves on the Oxbridge ideal (Collini, 2012). Although not education for employment in the current sense of the term, this educative function was generally vocationally biased. This has continued to the present day through long-standing, professionally-oriented programmes in Russell Group universities. The Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge is a good example.

Although challenged by the establishment of the German universities discussed below, the function of higher education as a preparation for employment retains its currency. In the UK it was strengthened by the Labour government's introduction in 1965 of a binary system, made up of universities, which were multi-purpose in their educational

aims, and of polytechnics which were more vocationally oriented (Trowler, 2002). Although reversed through the re-designation of former polytechnics as universities in 1992 as noted above, a report published by the Commission on the Future of Higher Education (Pearce, 2013) proposes the re-expansion of vocationally-oriented learning, with further education colleges having the ability to award degrees and the designation of ‘polytechnic’ being re-introduced. Such re-designation is designed to forefront the development of the vocational aspect of the academy’s work.

The university retains its role in preparing individuals for a productive and rewarding working life, with graduates seeking to use their degree to enhance their employability. Employability also forms a key performance indicator for the organisation, both through internal audits and through graduate employment tables published annually by the Higher Education Statistics Agency ([www.hesa.ac.uk/index](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index)). Such statistics are problematic, however, as indicators of potential future employment. Universities with large medical, engineering and pharmacy Schools, for example, are automatically propelled to the top of comparative tables by dint of the national high employment rates in these industries (Kensington-Miller et al., 2014). Equally, the rapidly shifting economic climate renders it difficult for prospective or even current students to accurately predict their employment prospects on graduation based on historical data (Higher Education Careers Service Unit and the Education Liaison Task Group, 2010). Despite this challenge, higher education as a preparation for individual employment retains its currency.

Government policy articulated in *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003) highlights an additional employment imperative, focusing on the national rather than personal economic earning power of those who participate in higher education. I am not suggesting that the primacy of this economic focus is a recent revival; Watson (2002) tells us that the economic benefits of the university were being discussed in the late 1960s, with polytechnics established with at least some financial intention in mind. However, the economic imperatives for the university and its graduates are increasingly overtly discussed, with the need for the academy’s core activities of

learning and teaching to have national economic impact repeatedly stressed, for example, by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS, 2009, 2011) and Universities UK (2011, 2012). The theory of human capital offers some insight into potential issues caused by this growing imperative.

Arising from labour economics, human capital theory reduces individuals to the stock of knowledge or characteristics the worker has which supports his/her productivity (Acemoglu & Autor, 2013). The function of a university as here envisaged would be to support national productivity through best preparing workers to take their part in the production process. Casting the university as a producer of future workers is problematic in many ways. Firstly, a moral question is raised. The national economic plan can be seen to be determined largely through the vested interest of those in power. An over-emphasis on the link between education and national prosperity may lead to students being forced into developing skills which suit the imperatives of others but which shut down their own passions and aptitudes.

Secondly, such a position assumes that all students are equally able to learn the skills required to support the economy. Students are not homogenous, nor do they arrive at university as a blank slate. On the contrary, they arrive with their unique 'capital', that is, in Bourdieu's (1997) terms, their own system of social relations and economy of practices developed through family and professional experiences. The nature of this individual capital clearly influences their potential to succeed both at university and in the workplace. This complexity is recognised in Becker's (1993) alternative work on human capital. Here, Becker suggests that the 'rate of return' on education, and indeed the differential earning power of individuals, cannot be understood purely in relation to skills learned through schooling but only through a more reflective analysis of both the inputs to and outcomes of the educational process.

Thirdly, the university's claim on the fulfilment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century employability agenda is increasingly open to question, with alternative sources of higher education for employment gaining in respect. The Thiel Fellowship ([www.thielfellowship.org/](http://www.thielfellowship.org/))

for example, pays recipients to drop out of university and focus on their own projects. Equally, websites such as [notgoingtouniversity.co.uk](http://notgoingtouniversity.co.uk) promote the apprenticeship route to employment (Barber et al., 2013).

Whilst it is important to debate the economic function of the university, I agree with Boulton and Lucas' (2008) view that a preoccupation with this function is unhelpful if it stifles a consideration of the academy's wider role. I therefore now discuss the function of the university as a provider of education for higher learning.

### **Education for higher learning**

The economic imperative of the university is acknowledged above. However, Collini's (2012) argument that a university embodies a set of aspirations and ideals which go beyond producing employable graduates and economic returns remains powerful. This argument gains some authority from its long history. A view of education as the development of the powers of the mind underpinned the establishment of the University of Berlin by Von Humbolt in 1810. A centre for higher learning, rather than a training ground for the clergy or for the elite, the customary curriculum of a liberal education was here supplemented by advanced scholarship and scientific research (Collini, 2012). The union of such scholarship and research were seen as key to the development of the enquiring minds and higher learning which characterised the academy.

Many other German universities were subsequently developed according to this model, attracting scholars from both the United States and Britain. By the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, although civic universities continued to focus on the development of phronesis - practical wisdom - others embraced episteme - more theoretical forms of understanding (Eisner, 2002). Although the equivalence of these different routes might be debated, it remains the case that a university education was valued not just for a degree which paid economic returns but also as a way to contribute to societal

good and to wider knowledge development. It was not simply about higher education but about higher learning (Hamlyn, 1996), a concept which itself stands in need of critical exploration.

Higher learning could be conceptualised as the growth of students into fully developed human beings with the capacity for intellectual activity, cultural appreciation, and, above all, moral choice. However, historically, the concept of higher learning was largely based on a scientific-rational understanding of truth (Habermas & Blazek, 1987). There were essential truths that could be learned. The 21<sup>st</sup> century questioning of the existence of such truths, of the nature of what can be known, caused a fundamental re-thinking of the concept. The shift from a welfare state to a market state, from an industrial economy through a service economy to a knowledge economy, combined with shifting cultural patterns to render the world a more difficult place to know.

The search for truth and the grand narratives of life is of reduced value when such narratives no longer seem relevant. In the age of super-complexity (Barnett, 2008), our frameworks for understanding the world both proliferate and become less firm. The very nature of what is accepted as knowledge is questioned. In such a context, higher learning becomes interpreted as engagement with questions of how to be a fully developed human being and how to learn rather than how to know (Barnett, 2004). The university becomes a place in which knowledge is made relative and students learn how to use different forms of shifting knowledge to build and navigate their lives (Collini, 2012). This critique of the nature of knowledge is highly relevant to this study which explored the impact of different understandings and relative value of the nature of knowledge and knowledge-sharing on professional self-view. Equally relevant is the contextual instability referenced here. A firm understanding of an individual's role as a professional is arguably more difficult to secure in such a shifting organisational and sector environment.

The university not only has a role in the ways in which current knowledge is understood or used but also in the development of new knowledge. It is to the university as an institution dedicated to knowledge-creation in the widest sense that I now turn.

### **The university as knowledge-creator**

This chapter has focused on the academy's role in the provision of education for employment and for higher learning. In this section, I consider the position of the university as one of a number of knowledge-building communities. Proposing a strong link between a knowledge-creation and educative function, I critique arguments presented around the relationship between teaching and research and propose the concept of scholarship as helpful in clarifying this connection.

A key function of the university is to create knowledge through research, which is itself a contested concept. Research can be conceptualised both as the pursuit and production of pure knowledge and as learning with an applied purpose. Pure or basic research is exploratory in nature and is undertaken without any pre-determined practical end-use. It can be motivated by interest or intuition and the will to advance knowledge. Now sometimes known as curiosity-driven research, it can be driven by curiosity without a defined end point or goal (Chakradhar, 2012). Such research can also be more strategic in intent, with academics undertaking focused explorations to push the boundaries of a discipline or field.

Applied research, in contrast, explores potential solutions to everyday practical problems. It may, for example, lead to a cure for an illness or the development of technologies. User-driven research is an example of applied research in which the researcher responds to needs expressed by the user (Randhawa, 2013). Such an explanation of research appears to support Gibbons et al.'s (1994, in Blass et al., 2012) sharp differentiation between pure, Mode 1 knowledge, and Mode 2 knowledge with

its dialogic, social and application orientation (HEFCE, 1997), as discussed in Chapter 1. As Blass et al. (2012) point out however, these do not need to be mutually exclusive. Indeed, the impact agenda of the Research Excellence Framework is evidence of a growing imperative to ensure that Mode 1 knowledge also produces applied impact. Nor is it the case that the university is now unique in the knowledge-production function or that knowledge development remains confined to long-established disciplines or even to the university campus (Lea, 2005). Much research now takes place within research institutes in industry or, indeed, in dispersed spaces such as online communities.

With the internet, through such applications as Google, acting as a key facilitator of knowledge building (Scott, 2010), cross-disciplinary synthesis becomes increasingly viable, with knowledge development open to all who have online access. Here, online communities of practice continue to support individuals' capacity to collaborate to build understanding (Cothrel & Williams, 1999). The increasing role of Twitter in providing timely information on developments in various disciplinary fields is another example of how such open knowledge development finds new avenues of virtual support (Clarke et al., 2012). The dominance of the university as a physical space in which knowledge is created by individual academics is challenged by such virtual, knowledge-producing communities.

The growing popularity of MOOCs (massive open online courses) provides another challenge to the dominance of discrete academies as knowledge-creators, adding an additional dimension to the shifting higher education context discussed earlier in this chapter. In this case, the challenge comes from the ability of MOOCs, as global providers of free education, to facilitate the democratisation of knowledge. The current business model of the university, where students pay to learn, may well be contested by this rapidly developing network of free providers. The relevance of the growth of MOOCs to this study arises from their potential challenge to the power of the university to decide on what counts as valuable knowledge and to set the price it will charge to share it, or develop it, with others. The MOOCs' challenge to this



dominance provides an interesting example of how seemingly impenetrable structures can be breached. It could be argued that the university retains an advantage in that it is the sole institution which combines the pursuit of knowledge with the awarding of academic qualifications (Blass et al, 2012). However, some MOOC providers are now offering ‘proof of learning’ in the form of certificates for those who wish to demonstrate that they have completed courses (The Economist, 2013). Despite potentially diminishing its democratic intent, as proof comes at a cost, such a move nevertheless allows MOOC providers, often universities themselves it should be acknowledged, to move towards supporting knowledge development and accrediting learning activity outside of the confines of a single institution.

These developments call into question the idea of a distinct place where knowledge can be developed. Similar questions might also be asked about the means of developing such knowledge. Von Humbolt, in establishing the University of Berlin, held the union of teaching and research as a key lever in the development of new knowledge. Knowledge was to be advanced both by teaching and by the pursuit of original research and enquiry by academics and students, supported by both of these endeavours (Anderson, 2009). This position is challenged in current literature, however, where the relationship between research, teaching and student learning remains disputed. A consideration of the differing conceptualisations of this relationship is useful in developing an understanding of the intersection between the various elements of the academic role.

An argument advanced by Cochran-Smith (2005) suggests that the learning, thinking and professional stimulation associated with research activity can have a positive impact on the student experience. Although this has support from other studies (see, for example, Jenkins et al., 2007, and Chetty & Lubben, 2010), Shore et al.’s assessment (1990) of such impact as subtle and complex retains its currency. Moreover, the argument for an inconclusive correlation between staff engagement with research and student learning robustly challenges this view. Ramsden & Moses (1992), for example, propose there to be no simple functional relationship between

research productivity and the effectiveness of undergraduate teaching. Hattie & Marsh (1996:508), based on a literature review of 58 studies, go further with their conclusion that ‘the common belief that research and teaching are inextricably entwined is an enduring myth’. For Hughes (2005) the number and prevalence of such myths militate against high quality research into this complex relationship.

The discussion of the research-teaching nexus in the literature as a whole is weakened by the scant attention paid to the nature of the activities of teaching and research however (Westergaard, 1991). The elements which make up these complex processes are simply assumed, and assumed as different, with the focus being on measuring the resulting impact of one on another rather than on understanding the essential character of both. As Westergaard (1991) suggests, conceptualising research and teaching as co-dependent with each strengthening the other, potentially allows for a deeper understanding of the impact of both activities on the development of an enquiring mind.

The concept of scholarship is useful here in its denotation of the inter-connected nature of academic practice. I am using the term scholarship here to refer to the different aspects of an academic’s practice. Boyer (1990) suggests the scholarships of discovery, integration, application and teaching as overlapping elements of academic work. The scholarship of discovery aims to build new knowledge, whilst the scholarship of integration seeks to interpret the use of knowledge across disciplines. The scholarship of application is a dynamic process in which understanding is developed for and through applications to society, to organisations and to individuals. Refuting the simplistic reduction of university teaching to an instrumental activity, Boyer (1990) claims that, in the scholarship of teaching, the work of the academic becomes live in the exploration and development of understandings with and through others. Brew and Boud (1995) develop this connection further through their exploration of the shared process of learning in teaching and research. Scholarship then is used to suggest a particular form of engagement with practice, an academic

professionalism demonstrated by all academics regardless of their particular function (Kreber, 2013).

This more multi-faceted understanding of what it means to be a scholar appears initially helpful. However, its focus on the development of knowledge through four inter-related scholarship activities could render it anachronistic if we are to accept the diminishing importance of learning to know in the 21<sup>st</sup> century academy. For example, frameworks of graduate attributes, describing the traits which students should develop at university, focus on qualities and understandings often derived from considerations of employability (CBI & NUS, 2011) rather than on a discrete knowledge-base. Despite this potential criticism, I would argue that the concept of scholarship remains fundamental to an understanding of the university. The key illuminative feature of the scholarship model for this study is not its focus on knowledge but its integration of the purposes and activities of the academic.

Varying understandings of the nature of these links between the scholarship functions are proposed in the literature. Westergaard (1991), for example, deconstructs the processes of teaching and research into common scholarship attributes such as calculating, pondering, de-constructing and re-constructing. Feather (2010), exploring the conceptions of academic identity held by lecturers in further education colleges, conceptualises teaching, research and scholarship as forming a happy alliance, whilst Evans' (2009) study constructs them as connected sub-sets. This model, whilst initially stimulating, gives little suggestion of the impact of one academic activity on the others. It is Brew and Boud (1995) who I feel most persuasively articulate the implication of the concept of scholarship for academic identity. They re-conceptualise learning as a process of enquiry rather than simply a product of a transmission model of teaching. They see research not as pure knowledge production but as a process of coming to know how to be as an academic. In this construction, learning is acknowledged as both collective and identity-forming. The elements which contribute towards such identity-formation are complex however. Clegg (2008) and Whitchurch (2008) both point out the perils of over-simplifying the identity development process.

However, the powerful suggestion of the impact of research activity on academic identity formation is persuasive. Undertaking research is seen not simply as the fulfilment of an organisational requirement to be productive or research active as judged through processes such as the REF, but instead as an essential activity of intellectuals, based on individual principles and one's values as a scholar. Nixon (2004) terms such an interpretation of the integration of scholarship activities as moral coherence. Winter (2009) makes a similar point in contrasting the experience of the 'academic manager', for whom the personal and corporate values align, and the 'managed academic' who finds personal values to be in tension with corporate ideals.

The central relevance of the concept of moral purpose for this study was pre-figured in Chapter 1 and is discussed more fully in Chapter 10. In brief, I use the term moral purpose in relation to academic practice in the Aristotelian sense, that is, I see it as a driver for practice which is based in ethical choice and the determination to change things for the better (MacIntyre, 1985). The argument that the elements which make up academic practice cannot be artificially separated if they are to serve such a moral purpose, to achieve moral coherence, has profound implications for academics. It suggests that choosing to engage positively with some aspects of the academic role, whilst rejecting others, has the potential to impact negatively on both an individual's professional identity and the effectiveness of their practice.

This argument becomes problematic however in the light of the changing nature of the academic role. The concept of 'academic unbundling' is helpful in making visible the nature of this shift. Referencing the increasing tendency to sub-divide the work of academics into specialist functions, it points towards the creation of para-academics who perform discrete, bounded aspects of the holistic academic role (Macfarlane, 2011). HESA (2015) data on the employment function of academic staff in 2013-14 shows 9.7 per cent of full-time academic staff to be on teaching only contracts, a rise from 6.9 per cent in 2008-9 (HESA, 2010). 29.2 per cent of academic staff had research only contracts, broadly comparable with the figure in 2008-9. In 2013-14, 60.2 per cent of academic staff had teaching and research contracts, as compared to 64

per cent in 20013-14, with 0.8 per cent focused on neither teaching nor research. The impact of the move towards splitting academic functions is, then, evidenced contractually.

The stimulus for this academic unbundling appears open to debate. Billot (2010), for example, argues that it is the result of a tension between institutional and individual understandings of the proper nature of an academic identity. Others hold as catalysts the massification agenda (Courtney, 2013) and the increasing specialisation of academic roles to support a performative culture (Macfarlane, 2011). Its potential impact is equally debateable, with Wyness (2011), for example, arguing for the logic of teaching only and research only posts, whilst Macfarlane (2005) challenges the potential for an authentic engagement with the full spectrum of academic activity which such a way of seeing implies.

The importance of the concept of academic unbundling for this study lies in the challenge it poses to moral coherence, proposed as emanating from the cohesion of different aspects of academic practice. Allowing a critical approach to what it is to be an academic in a changing HE context, it also provokes thinking around the impact of work intensification in an academic role which is becoming increasingly fractured. A noted phenomenon in public sector work in the 1990s (Green, 2002), work intensification refers to the rate of physical or mental input to work tasks. In their research focused specifically on academic work, Ogbonna and Harris (2004) give clear evidence of the mental labour necessitated by growing work demands, whilst Bryson (2004) makes a compelling argument for work intensification as the cause of declining morale and job satisfaction amongst teaching staff in particular. It is the link between work intensification and academic unbundling which is of particular interest to this study however. The increasing demands placed on academics to work more efficiently and effectively may well militate against the development of a holistic approach to the academic role and instead point towards focusing on one activity in which one can become expert, with the consequent challenge to moral coherence this may pose.

In this section, I have suggested that embracing the breadth of the academic role offers the potential for positive academic citizenship (Macfarlane, 2007), that is, the possibility of service both to individual institutions and, by extension, to society as a whole. Acknowledging that such service has to take place within institutional constraints, the following section focuses on a particular aspect of this contribution to global civil society. It argues that universities perform a key social function through being a place of both knowledge production and public discourse in which the voices of many citizens, if still not all, can be heard.

### **The development of citizenship**

David Willetts, Minister of State for University and Science from 2010-2014, provided an interesting commentary on the role of research and knowledge building in a civil society in an address to the Department of Business and Skills. Firmly supporting the value of applied research, he argued that research needs to be useful, to have a positive impact (Blass et al., 2012). Such an impact can take many forms. It can be practical, such as the development of a new medicine or increased understanding of how to build more sustainable housing. It can also be about the development of just and civil societies themselves (Blass et al., 2012).

The knowledge produced within the early universities was in part used in such a civil manner to maintain national ideas and national consciousness. This, together with, Habermas' conception of the university as a place where 'the whole spiritual life of the nation would come to be concentrated' (1989:109, in Kwiek, 2006) may appear outmoded in times when the concept of the nation state is diminishing in power and that of globalisation is in its ascendancy. However, this potential anachronism is avoided by replacing the concept of national citizenship with that of world citizenship. In this case, the argument that universities perform a key social function in reproducing and enriching democratic civil society is strengthened. Universities can then be seen to retain their role as a place of public discourse. Their role in feeding

and enriching public debate remains central. They also continue to have a function in supporting democracy, although the degree to which they allow the voices of all to be equally heard is contested, as explored below.

Habermas' belief that all human beings could communicate and interact with others, regardless of their culture, ethnicity or academic background is particularly relevant given the widening participation agenda (Gomez et al., 2011). The voices of a large proportion of students entering the university are no longer those traditionally associated with higher education. The role of the first universities, to expose the minds of the elite to the 'best that has been thought and known in the world' (Arnold, 1983:31, cited in Smith & Webster, 1997), has been overturned. It has been claimed that everyone in a university can now help to develop knowledge through public discourse (Gomez et al., 2011). Peters' (2013:10) theory of radical openness would take this even further and say that everyone can contribute to the collective development of knowledge through 'the wisdom of the crowd'. The once special role of the university in knowledge-creation is, in Scott's (2010) terms, being transgressed by wider society. Such collective wisdom-making provides a challenge to the concept of organisations as simply drawing on human capital, instead giving agency to the workers, encouraging 'creative labor rather than estranged labor' (Peters, 2013:10). This contests the argument that the validity of university research relies on a particular expertise of those within the academy. Indeed, it has a clear application to my research in its suggestion that all are able to contribute to knowledge-building, not simply those skilled or experienced in research and academic writing. The Robbins principle (Robbins, 1963), that university education should be available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment, may appear to have been realised, with all who qualify being not only able to attend university but to contribute fully to the knowledge-building processes which are at its heart. A critical review of the make-up of the student population reveals a more complex picture however, suggesting a role for the university as a reproducer of the social order.

## **The reproduction of the social order**

This reflection on the role of the university in the reproduction of the social order begins with a focus on students before moving onto the application of a social justice agenda to the academics at the centre of my study. The university as originally conceived was the province of the elite. In 2011-12 however, the percentage of 17-30 year olds attending university was 49 per cent, close to the 50 per cent to which policy-makers have long aspired (DBIS, 2013). This points to the achievement of the social justice agenda imagined by Ashby (1967), offering higher level study to the majority rather than the minority. The massification agenda could thus be seen to provide a clear challenge to the prevailing social order through the emancipatory route of education. Indeed, it has been argued that no single phenomenon has had a greater influence on the life chances of individuals (Scott, 2010). However, Watson's (2002) suggestion that economic development has provided a more urgent imperative than any such social justice agenda should not be ignored. The achievement of the government's intention of 50 per cent of people going to university, for example, was designed to come in large part through the introduction of foundation degrees, designed predominantly to meet employer rather than student need (Pearce, 2013).

An exploration of the individual stories behind the statistics of university entrance raises further issues. Rising participation levels tend to suggest that everyone has an equal opportunity to attend university. This is arguable on many levels. Firstly, individuals have to have a given level of academic ability to secure university entrance. This ability is currently judged by performance in public examinations, with each university setting the level of performance needed for entry to specific courses of study. It is understandable that individuals' capacities to cope with the cognitive demands of university study should be assessed prior to their entry into a course. However, the view that such capacity can be judged by the current examination system is open to challenge. Gardner (1983), for example, questions the idea of intelligence as a single entity, offering instead the existence of a multitude of



intelligences, some of which may not be directly ‘testable’ with current school-based assessment methods.

Secondly, despite the extending participation agenda and initiatives such as Aim Higher ([www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/wp/recentwork/aimhigher/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/wp/recentwork/aimhigher/)), designed to widen participation in HE by raising awareness and aspirations from under-represented groups (DfES, 2003), the national student population remains skewed. Students from areas in Britain which have traditionally had low participation at university continue to be in the minority in higher education, particularly in Russell Group universities. At the University of Cambridge in 2011-12, for example, 2.5 per cent of undergraduates were from low participation neighbourhoods, and only 57.9 per cent from state schools or colleges (Higher Education Statistics Agency, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/09/10/emp>).

Lastly, the rise in tuition fees has the potential to impact on the student mix. In 2010, the UK government passed a series of higher education reforms with the stated aim of delivering a university system which was responsive to student need. Key elements of these reforms included a new system of funding for tuition, with any university being able to charge a fee of up to £9,000 if they met widening participation and fair access conditions (DBIS, 2011). Students can apply for a loan to meet this payment, which they re-pay when their graduate income reaches certain thresholds. This move from a publically-funded education system to a fee-paying system has deep-seated implications for social justice and the basis upon which education is valued. Requiring students to pay fees implies an embracing of the commodification of education, in which learning becomes a private good to be purchased rather than the result of the shared activity of a community of learners (Spillane, 2000). McArthur (2011) makes a persuasive argument that higher education’s role as a source of economic mobility, and of the social mobility which often accompanies it, is severely challenged by this policy of replacing publically-financed higher education with privately incurred debt-funding.

It could be argued that the move to viewing students as paying customers (DBIS, 2011) will impact positively on standards of learning and teaching in the university or that the reverse will be true. This is yet to be evaluated. What is already clear is that the rise in tuition fees has led to a shift in the pattern of applications, with mature student applications in England falling by more than 18,000 (a 14 per cent decline) since the introduction of the new £9,000 fees regime (Independent Commission on Fees, 2013). A gender gap is similarly reported, with the decline in the overall number of male students being faster, at 7.6 per cent, than the decline in female students, at 6.4 per cent. The report shows that while there has been some general growth in university applications from the least advantaged areas, this trend is not reflected in applications to Russell Group universities.

This reflection on the university's function in supporting the current social order in terms of the student body has implications for an understanding of academics' attitudes and approaches to academic writing. One function of writing and publication is to enable all academics to have a voice in society, to share their views on equal terms with others and to have influence in the public sphere. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, academics in Schools of Education often feel distanced from the world of research and publication (Griffiths et al., 2010), having a limited sense of their entitlement to engage in and publish from the type of research which feels meaningful to them in the face of previously-accepted norms. For both students and academics then, even discourses within the university which ostensibly seek to support social mobility, such as the academic literacies agenda, in practice appear instead to shore up previously accepted norms.

### **Moving forward**

Universities are not homogenous, fixed entities which are easily conceptualised (Smith & Webster, 1997). Instead, they are made up of heterogeneous shapes and spaces (Barnett, 2005) evolving, according to Ashby (1967), in an almost animate way in

accordance with their environment and their past. The current ambiguous situation of the university in particular presents conflicting opportunities for growth and development (Nixon, 2006). My research question clearly signals the importance of context to the development of research identity and academic writing. A conceptualisation of the university as the field in which professional identities are formed and lived out is therefore key to the design of empirical research which seeks to explore the relationship between academics' professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university.

I have suggested in this chapter that the educative purpose of the university has shifted over time, with the aim of preparing individuals for occupational roles needed by society or industry and education in the wider sense of higher learning existing in tension. The role of the university in the development of citizenship and the reproduction of the social order are particularly important for this study. Teacher educators in my university may well interpret this citizenship function as achieved through their work with trainee teachers, who will then influence the young people in their care. However, in the field of the university, citizenship may be alternatively understood as including or indeed focusing on economic productivity. A view of productivity as measured by REF outputs or grants gained may well be alien to some of my colleagues. Such a view of the functions of research, and, by extension, academic writing, could well be inimical to the development of colleagues' acceptance and practice of the research aspect of their scholarship activities. The objection to engaging in research could emanate not from the process itself but a particular understanding of its function.

This argument is of particular relevance to my post-1992 university which does not have a long tradition of knowledge-creation to draw upon in justifying its purpose and hence activities. In my university, it is this knowledge-creation role which most clearly raises issues of the right to write, the type of knowledge which is valued and the relationship between professional identity and writing practice. I move on in the

next chapter to consider how academics inhabiting the university develop their professional identity and its implications for attitudes and approaches to academic writing.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Conceptualising identity**

In this chapter I continue the process begun in Chapter 2 of critically examining the key phenomena which illuminate my area of focus. I began by exploring the idea of the university, considering the ways in which this impacts on the identity of those who work and learn within it. In this chapter, I explore this concept of identity. There are many possible approaches to identity, proposed in a comprehensive literature around this subject. The comment made by my colleague - 'I'm not the sort of person who writes' - stimulated the particular route I took through it. This comment activated my interest in the strand of literature which seeks to explain the development of identity in the socially-constructed world, that is, to explain how one comes to be 'the kind of person one is recognised as being, at a given time and place' (Gee, 2001:99). This is not to deny the validity of an alternative approach which might focus on identity as determined by birth for example. It simply allows me to put a boundary around the line of thought in the literature which seems most likely to support me in achieving the aim of exploring the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing.

Definitions of the term identity are only partially useful in that the complexity of the concept makes it difficult to meaningfully encompass in a few words. However, they provide a valuable starting point. In everyday parlance, the term identity is used to refer to particular characteristics and attributes of an individual by which we distinguish one person from another - the human capacity to know who is who (Jenkins, 1996). A dominant feature of this way of seeing identity is that it is fixed and inflexible. We know who we are, we know what sort of person another is. We do not expect either us or them to change. The narrowness of this view is exposed through Erikson's (1975) work on identity crisis. Erikson makes a compelling

argument for identity as a work in progress, not a fixed state but a process of development. At any given point in time then, we are not so much someone as we are between being one kind of someone, on our way to being the next kind of someone. The 'kind of person we are' can develop from one moment to another as we move between situations and contexts. Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) proposal of the active term 'identification' is more helpful than the passive term 'identity' because it builds on this conceptualisation of identity as activity. It allows us to ask the question, how do we identify ourselves? How do others identify us? An interesting continuum may be discerned in the literature as authors propose answers to this question. At one end, writers such as Goffman (1959) suggest identity is formed through the self-conscious pursuit of individual interests, with identification with a group emerging as a by-product, whilst Tajfel (1982) represents the opposing view with his proposition of social identity as formed through identification with a group.

I position myself centrally on this continuum, seeing these apparently opposing positions as actually fundamentally inter-connected. For example, I see a teacher educator's self-identification as a writer to arise in part from a need to fulfil organisational expectations in order to progress in an academic career. However, a wish to align herself with others who write could also be a powerful motivating factor. Understanding identity development in terms of this dichotomy appears rather restrictive however. The typology suggested by Gee (2001) offers greater explanatory potential. Gee (2001) suggests there are perspectives to consider in understanding what it means to be a certain type of person, the perspectives of nature identity, institutional identity, discursal identity and affinity identity. These perspectives are not separate either in theory or practice but instead are interrelating and interconnected in multifaceted ways. Whilst acknowledging their interconnectedness, I nevertheless artificially separate them below as an organising device to critique the concept of identity. This approach enables me to focus my attention on different aspects of how identity is developed and sustained which in turn influences the design of my empirical work.

## **The nature perspective**

The first perspective, nature identity, suggests that we are who we are primarily because of our 'nature'. This perspective directs attention to Goffman's (1959) end of the continuum, with a focus on the individual and a conception of identity as state rather than activity. Here, a static identity is determined either by birth or by early events in life. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capital offers a persuasive explanatory framework for this perspective. He uses this concept to explore the system of social relations and economy of practices which individuals draw on in order to live their lives making a 'profit' and to provide an explanation for the unequal nature of this reward. He introduces four forms of capital - economic, social, cultural and symbolic - which act as a system of exchange. Economic capital, the most easily recognisable form in everyday parlance, describes the command which an individual has over money or assets. In the term social capital, 'capital' has another meaning. Social capital refers to the result of the investment people make in order to secure social acceptability. Individuals with high social capital have firmly-established social resources which they can call upon when required. Cultural capital refers to the cultural resources which an individual possesses; for example, an understanding of how to achieve success in certain settings or contexts through the use of appropriate behaviours. These capitals are transformed, through an automatic process, into symbolic capital, that is, the recognition by others of the validity of an individual's other accrued capitals, which occurs when that individual enters a particular domain.

Bourdieu argues that accrued capital builds such capacity for success. This portfolio of accrued capital influences our view of ourselves as individuals or members of social groups which impacts on the system of beliefs and values which an individual takes on and inhabits, our 'habitus'. Our lasting dispositions and propensities to think, feel and act in a certain way emanate from this view of ourselves. The application of the theory of capital to academic life is illuminated in *Homo academicus* (1988) where Bourdieu discusses the way in which capital plays out in the academy. Here, capital and habitus are seen to work in tandem to produce hierarchies and underpin opinions

on what constitutes legitimate expectations about how time is spent, and on structural issues such as promotional prospects.

As an explanatory framework for a view of identity as both fixed and in some ways pre-determined, the concepts of capital and habitus appear initially attractive. A belief that individuals' views of themselves are influenced by the past is logical and persuasive. The concept of capital seems to offer some explanation for why some individuals experience more success than others, both socially and economically. However, the framework appears to have a fundamental flaw. Whilst accepting McNay's assertion (2000, cited in Reay, 2004) that some of Bourdieu's texts are less deterministic than others, the concept of habitus does seem to invite a view that the future is fixed in place by the past. Some individuals seem to overcome their past and achieve success, however. Something must be at work then to mitigate the impact of habitus in some. Di Maggio (1979, cited in Reay, 2004) suggests this 'something' to be the complex interplay between past and present in the development of habitus. Others support this less deterministic conceptualisation of capitals, and the ensuing habitus. Coleman (1988), for example, writing at a similar time, had a broader view of social capital, seeing it not only as held by the powerful but having potential value for diverse sections of society, although also accepting its restrictive nature. Field (2008) supports this challenge, although making the interesting point that a common value position is key to individuals being able or even willing to draw on one another for support.

These challenges to Bourdieu's (1997) conception of social capital imply a conception of habitus as not fixed but malleable, a constant work in progress. Humans do appear to have the ability to avoid being governed by the past and to change their circumstances (Giroux, 1983). Such a challenge to our assigned place in the order of things comes from our ability to question the value-judgements of others and thus to increase our stores of capital in a potential re-assignment of worth (Webb et al., 2002). Habitus is here re-interpreted from a fixed product of childhood experience to a constantly reconstructed phenomenon through individuals' encounters with the outside



world. In my study, the outside world which I am particularly interested in is the world of the university. It has been argued that institutions have their own habitus, constantly re-shaped by socio-economic-political influences and by the students and staff who inhabit the physical manifestation of the organisation (Reay et al., 2009a). So how does the habitus of the university influence the development of identity of those who work within it? A critique of Gee's (2001) second perspective on identity, the institutional perspective, offers some ways of thinking about this question.

### **The institutional perspective**

From the institutional perspective, identity is not a set state determined at birth or in childhood but is instead fluid, constantly developed through the activity of occupying positions in society (Gee, 2001). The belief that identities are not only located in but are partially formed by the communities we inhabit has a long history (Mead, 1934; Giddens, 1984; Hall, 1996). Here, power is located in the institution, with the individual being shaped by its needs and ways of being. However, the argument fails to take account of the power of the individual in the formation of institutions through the day to day processes which they enact (Jenkins, 1996; Morgan, 1986). The concepts of structure and agency offer a helpful explanatory framework for this relationship.

Differently explained by social theorists, I am using 'structure' to describe societal arrangements, some of which are more fixed than others, which both arise from and influence individual action. 'Agency' is used to reference human beings' ability to act to change something. Structure and agency might be imagined as oppositional – societal structures block individuals from taking the actions they seek. However, the relationship between the two concepts has been held to be more complex than this. Giddens (1984), in his theory of structuration, argues for the duality of structure and agency, where structure and agency are seen as complementary, a position supported by Bourdieu (1986). In this conception, humans draw on structures in order to act,

and, in acting, impact on structures, often reproducing them. Thus social life is actively constructed. Such a complementary existence appears perfectly reasonable until subject to deeper scrutiny. In the context of my area of focus, the workings of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) provide a relevant example through which to explore more deeply the relationship between structure and agency in an institutional context.

In theory, choosing to develop publications for a REF submission could be construed as an expression of human agency. In making this decision, individuals demonstrate their ability to act in response to a structural demand. A positive decision to submit supports the structure; in making submissions to the REF, individuals confirm its continuing worth as a measure of their productivity. This explanation of the happy co-existence of structure and agency in this institutional process fails to acknowledge external influences on an individual's decision-making however. Academics are not wholly free to decide whether or not to engage with the REF. The organisation has expectations of them. Equally, the REF process itself has decision-making, and identity-making, powers. The requirements of the REF may influence the type of research individuals undertake, the type of knowledge they produce and the value attributed to this knowledge (Harley, 2002). An individual may not be judged through the REF assessment process to be producing valuable research. Equally, the university itself may make this judgement prior to the assessment process, based on its own, particular construction of the nature of valuable knowledge. Middleton's (2005) study of the impact of a research assessment exercise on New Zealand academics stressed the impact which such labels potentially have on self-view, self-belief and career progression. An individual thus has some power to engage with the structure but no power over the outcome of that engagement. Their agency is, in reality, compromised.

This compromising of agency remains an issue if, as Parker (2000) does, one constructs structure and agency as separate, a dualism rather than a duality. In this construction, structures are seen as constrainers or enablers, limiting or supporting individual actions. So what influences structures to become enablers or constrainers?

The missing piece of the jigsaw, according to Archer (2003), is the human capacity to strategically plan to avoid structural impediments or to capitalise on structural enablers. This capacity is strengthened through the exercise of reflexivity.

Reflexivity can be defined as a process of self-awareness through which we can critique our natural interpretation of life through reference to previous experience (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 1997). Goffman (1959) conceptualises the reflexive process as drawing on a deeply-held view of who we want to be, with actions judged by the degree to which they move us in the direction of this ideal self. Archer's (2003) work extends this view, focusing on the potential impact of the reflexive process on individuals, on society and on the relations between them. She proposes a particular manifestation of the reflexive process, termed 'the internal conversation', which, she suggests, can act as a supporting mechanism for individuals in establishing a course of action. The internal conversation is essentially an inner dialogue which allows individuals increasing control over their lives. It is this internal conversation which shapes the relationship between structure and agency as it impacts on individuals in day to day living. A critique of this perspective might focus on the responsibility placed on individuals to chart their own course in a complex organisational environment. The concept of self-efficacy throws light on ways in which such a difficult endeavour might be managed.

Self-efficacy, an individual's belief in their ability to exert influence over outcomes, is held to affect an individual's functioning in four ways: cognitively, through impacting on the degree to which we are able to plan for and visualise success; motivationally, with self-efficacy beliefs influencing effort expended to achieve goals; affectively, with beliefs about potential success determining stress levels in attempting to achieve a goal; and developmentally, in the avoidance of things we believe we cannot achieve and the subsequent inhibiting of life chances (Bandura, 1977). Thus what happens next is contingent on the degree of control we perceive ourselves to have over the future (Zimmerman, 2000). Neglecting to add the power of previous success into the mix appears to weaken this argument; surely completing a task successfully once

impacts powerfully on one's belief in one's ability to do it a second time? However, Pajares (1997) refutes this, citing research to demonstrate that the power of self-efficacy belief systems renders them a better determinant of future success than previous success.

This view of human patterning and endeavour provides an interesting challenge to Bourdieu's (1997) belief in the ultimate power of habitus, where the perceptions, beliefs and behaviours internalised by particular social groups are viewed as circumscribing individuals' effectiveness and mobility. A belief in self-efficacy contests the inevitability of such positioning, proposing individuals as having the capacity to change their life-path. This life-path is essentially a social one, with individuals acting in the social world. It is to this discursal perspective on identity development that I now turn.

### **The discursal perspective**

The discursal perspective on identity suggests that we are who we are because of the ways in which others recognise our accomplishments (Gee, 2001), placing this perspective at the group identification end of the continuum proposed at the start of this chapter. Jenkins' (1996) view of the importance of interactions between individuals is echoed strongly here. Thus the issue is not who I think I am but who others perceive me to be. From this perspective, identity is not institutionally defined but is determined by encounters with other individual actors. The concept of 'gaming' in academic life is relevant here. Arguing that research assessment exercises are the main game in academic life, Lucas (2006) points to the impact of this positioning on both what is valued in the academy and, by extension, on individual identity development. For example, a teacher educator in a university may decide that she wants to be seen as a researcher as well as a teacher, that she wants research to be part of the identity which is attributed to her. In order to secure this, she needs to take certain actions to encourage her colleagues to see her in this way. She may, for

example, volunteer to lead sessions within the university in which she shares the research she is undertaking. She may tell people that she cannot attend a planning meeting related to an upcoming teaching module as she has to complete a conference paper. In acting in this way, this teacher educator is seeking to get people to see her in a particular way.

This example raises a number of questions. The existence of a core identity, a way of being which is always at the heart of someone, otherwise termed a substantive self (Nias, 1989, in Murray & Male, 2005), is potentially challenged by the multiple identities apparently available through the discursal self (MacLure, 1993). A consideration of where the power lies in the development of such multiple selves is interesting however. Gee's (2001) model suggests that others have the upper hand here: we are what others see us to be. However, a presumed individual powerlessness in terms of how others see us ignores the human capacity to present ourselves as the occasion demands. Goffman (1959) uses metaphors from the theatre to underline the human capacity for agency in the presentation of self. Here, an individual may choose to present a front-stage, external self to others whilst living a more authentic, internal backstage self alone, an ability confirmed by Winter (2009) in his discussion of organisational identities. Although this projected identity may not always be authentic (Goffman 1959), power is nevertheless returned to the individual as they try out, and abandon as necessary, provisional selves (Ibarra, 1999). Gee's (2001) final perspective on identity draws on this linkage of individual and other in its focus on the impact of affinity on the process of identification.

### **The affinity perspective**

The affinity perspective is closely related to the discursal perspective and has particular relevance for my study. Positioned clearly at the social identification end of the continuum suggested earlier in this chapter, it proposes that the practices we undertake can identify us as either a member or not a member of a particular group. I

am interested in exploring what makes an individual describe themselves as ‘not the sort of person who writes’. Such an assertion suggests that there is a sort of person who does write and that the speaker does not want to be associated with this group. The importance of group affinity and its relevance for individual identity is therefore central to my study.

Any discussion of group identity has first to deal with the question posed in the sociological literature (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000) about the reality or otherwise of groups. From a social constructivist point of view I argue that groups exist if people think they exist, if the notion of the group is meaningful to individuals. However, a deeper understanding comes from a consideration of the notion of belonging – why do people wish to belong to some groups and not others? Why do some of my colleagues position themselves firmly in a group as one sort of academic and not another? The concepts of similarity and difference are central to this debate. Although identity theorists position themselves differently in terms of the importance of considerations of similarity and difference in self-identification, the implied divergence of view is perhaps not as stark as it seems. Hall (1996:17) for example suggests that identities are ‘the product of the marking of difference and exclusion’, a position supported by Taylor (1998). The concept of ‘othering’, describing a process where a person or group is marked as different to others (Johnson et al., 2004), is relevant here. Finding out who I am appears to include the procedure of finding out who I am not (Butler, 1990). It seems that discovery of similarity implies discovery of difference. However, this discovery may not be benign or neutral. Instead it could serve to suggest not only difference but also inferiority.

This debate rests on an understanding of ‘norms’ against which we judge our similarity or difference. An exploration of the idea of ‘figured worlds’ is helpful in understanding the genesis of these norms. Figured worlds are collective, imaginary worlds, not entirely unlike the imaginary worlds of children’s play which pre-figure them. Following Gee (2011), I use the term ‘figured worlds’ to signify the typical stories we tell which help us to understand the world and our place in it through

capturing what is held as typical or normal. A figured world is not simply a world of the imagination but is enacted in the social world and, in that enacting, made 'real' and shaped by its participants, whilst reciprocally shaping them. Bruner's (1991) understanding of life as nothing in itself but all in the text-making is an example of how figured worlds are made visible. We tell stories about ourselves and others which make our reality. The use of artefacts, symbolising the centrality of certain ways of behaving in the figured world, is another mechanism by which our beliefs and understandings about something are made clear.

The impact of figured worlds on individual identities comes from their focus on activity (Holland et al., 1998). A figured world does not simply exist, but is actively made and re-made through what people do. Others can then look at what is done and decide if they are part of that world or not, if they are similar to the individuals in that figured world or different from them. Lave and Wenger (1991), in their exploration of how new entrants to an organisation are socialised into it, offer an exploration of what activity in a figured world looks like in practice.

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1997) theory of social practice, Lave and Wenger (1991) see communities of practice as constituting a set of social relations between people, activities and contexts which enable newcomers to become full participants. They use the concept of legitimate peripheral participation to describe how experienced colleagues - adepts - provide access to practice which supports the development of newcomers' - apprentices - professional aptitudes and organisational relationships. The learning is both situated and active in that there is a curriculum through which apprentices are led by the adept, with resulting attitudinal and skills development. The development of identities is an outcome of such participation. This is an attractive ideal, with academics being socialised into the figured world of academic practice through peer learning (Boud, 1999). However, for some critics its practical application is limited. Gale (2011:223), for example, poses one such critique of the communities of practice literature, suggesting that many early career academics seem to exist in a 'professional bubble' of their own making. For Barton and Tusting (2005)

it is the lack of consideration of the darker sides of collegial working which are missing from Lave and Wenger's model, with issues of power, conflict and exclusion being largely absent. Individuals may have a limited choice of the world they are socialised into which, although malleable, is to some degree already set, with positions of power previously conferred.

Bourdieu's (1997) concept of field is again helpful here. A field is a world of relationships which in some ways parallels the concept of figured worlds. However, Bourdieu more clearly points out the nature of the field as mediated by positions of power. Figured worlds and fields are not neutral. They give a context for their participants' actions and meanings which are mediated by the surrounding structures and by cultural norms which may well be determined by those in positions of power. It is in this context that the identity of individuals continues to be formed.

This chapter to date has introduced a number of key ideas around the contested concept of identity. A summary of my position in relation to these ideas may be useful at this juncture. Viewing identity as a work in progress rather than fixed, I occupy a central position on the continuum which differentiates between a view of identity as a self-formed product and that of identity as formed through identification with a group. I am equally persuaded by the argument that the work of identity development takes place in a set of non-neutral contexts which themselves have identity-forming powers. My belief in self-efficacy and the power of human agency contests the inevitability of such positioning, instead proposing individuals as having the ability to shape their life-path. However, I have a strong belief in the identity-forming power of the way in which we are, or imagine ourselves to be, perceived by others. The proposition that the practices we undertake can identify us as either a member or not a member of a particular group resonates strongly with me, highlighting the potential importance of the practice of writing in identity-formation within the university. In this study I am particularly interested in the aspect of individual identity which relates to teacher educators' role as a professional. This aspect of identity is necessarily located in the figured world of what it is to be an academic in a university. In this construction, the



norms of the institution are perceived as set reference points. Individual values and norms may be in accord with these reference points or in conflict with them. The concept of professionalism allows the existence of an alternative set of more generic reference points, pointing towards a wider discourse. I therefore move on to examine the concept of professionalism.

### **The concept of professionalism**

Professionalism is accepted as a changing and problematic concept (Whitty, 2000). Hoyle's (1975) seminal work on professionalism provides a useful starting point for an investigation of the nature of the concept as it forms the basis of argument for so many commentators. Hoyle sees professionalism as 'those strategies and rhetorics employed by members of an occupation in seeking to improve status, salary and conditions' (1975:135). This focus on activity, rather than the characteristics approach to defining professionalism, points towards an important tension in the professionalism debate: autonomy or the holding and exercise of power. Elliot's (1993) typology of philosophies of teacher education is useful here. Arguing that the accepted platonic or rationalist view of teacher as autonomous professional has largely been replaced by a social market view, with teacher constructed as service provider, he indicates a shift in control from individual to organisation. Hoyle (2001) suggests that the removal of autonomy and work intensification which such managerialism produces could lead to a characterisation of a 'new professionalism' as a form of occupational control. The stratification noted as a feature of such professionalism is seen to have a deleterious effect on the self-esteem of many. As both Evans (2008) and Barnett (2008) point out, the results may even be de-professionalism, as individuals feel themselves unable to meet targets and increasingly isolated. This focus on the negative effects of stratification is interesting in that it mirrors the perceived impact of the REF and other managerial structures within the HEI sector. The experience of academics in responding to an increasingly managerial context thus appears to be a reflection of a wider issue amongst professionals.

Drawing on structuration theory and the idea of figured worlds, I would argue that this pessimistic view of professionalism fails to acknowledge the importance of the social construction of professionalism, and the role afforded individuals to act independently of organisational demands (Helsby, 1995). Boyt et al. (2001) support this argument, suggesting that a conception of profession as attitude allows for a re-distribution of power from organisation to individual. This alternative view of the genesis of professionalism, shifting the power balance from organisation to individual, constructs professionalism as reliant on individuals' attitudes towards what they do (Helsby, 1995). Here, professional imagination (Power, 2008) allows individuals to take control of their developing professional identity.

A distinction between professionalism and professionalism (Hoyle, 1975) supports the argument for the power of attitude in securing individual autonomy. Hoyle points to the difference between the status-related aspects of work on the one hand, termed professionalism, and the knowledge, skills and procedures which teachers use in their work, which he terms professionalism. According to Hoyle, restricted professionals value the day to day work of teaching, rely on intuition and sustain a classroom-based perspective. Extended professionals adopt an active approach to understanding professional needs and how to address them through enhanced communication with peers and engagement with theory. Elliott's (1993) work on practical science offers an alternative understanding of professionalism, in this case built upon knowledge created through practice. However, Schon's (1983) discussion of the primacy of 'hard', that is, pure, technical, knowledge over such practice-based knowing reminds us of the challenge in securing acceptance of such practice-based understanding.

The balance between the various activities which make up an extended professional approach is therefore open to debate. Nixon et al (1998) for example, views extended professionalism as having a focus on learning, supported by the subordinate activity of integrated research. However, Evans (2008) makes a good argument for the most important facet of professionalism as being the ideology and attitude which individuals bring to the professional role. The figured world of professional teacher educators

then could be based on a restrictive or extended view of themselves as professionals. What counts as 'normal' could be seen as retaining a focus on teaching and classroom activity with minimal engagement with other professionals or with theory. It could, conversely, be articulated as full engagement with research and writing and with the communities of practice which sustain such activity. An exploration of the literature which specifically focuses on the development of the identity of teacher educators is therefore apposite.

### **The identity of teacher educators**

Many teacher educators enter the academy to pursue a second career (Mills, 2006). The academy appears to offer an interesting and challenging new figured world in which to draw on and develop their skill-set as an educator. The move from school to academy often proves more challenging than expected however, with a diminution of confidence and sense of professional self (Dinkelman et al., 2006; Clemens et al., 2010). Teacher educators often feel de-stabilised in a new environment, having been accustomed to being established as successful and experienced professionals in a school context (LaRocco & Bruns, 2006). In this, they mirror the experience of other new entrants to the academy in their lack of understanding of the rules of the new 'game' (Smith, 2010:577) they find themselves playing. Given this, teacher educators' tendency in self-identification to highlight the teaching aspect of their identity is understandable. This is a comfortable and recognised role which draws on familiar forms of cultural capital. The accustomed 'sub-identity' (Swennen et al., 2010) of teacher, developed through inhabiting the institutional community of a school, is privileged above the as yet relatively unknown sub-identity as researcher (Boyd & Harris, 2010). The notion of a sub-identity conveys unchangeability and appears therefore to be in tension with my view of identity as activity, as a process rather than a state. However, the two positions are not necessarily incompatible. It is conceivable that, at a given point in time, we may recognise ourselves as a certain type

of person or as a member of a given professional group whilst understanding that this alignment may well change over time.

This teacher sub-identity is not formed purely through an individual's response to institutional needs, in this case, those of a school. Instead, it may be based on more deep-seated core values. In acts of individual agency (Giddens, 1984), many teachers choose a career which allows them to act, for example, in accordance with their commitment to supporting the development of students (Davison et al., 2005), for them a cornerstone of their professional identity.

A values-based approach to understanding the identity of teacher educators illuminates the meaning of the statement 'I am not the sort of person who writes'. Aligning oneself with one group or another could well be a device for 'justifying, explaining and making sense of one's conduct, career, values and circumstances' (MacLure, 1993:316). The values of commitment to students, for example, may well militate against the development of a new and unfamiliar sub-identity as a 'researcher', particularly where this activity is not wholly understood or appears to be built on alternative values. It is understandable that the imperative of research and publication do not always seem to teacher educators to align with the need to teach and develop others (Maguire, 2000). Teacher educators may well perceive the focus to be not on the student but on the self, on self-aggrandisement and self-promotion. This, together with a lack of confidence in publication activity (Avis et al., 2003), is held by some as key to many teacher educators' construction of themselves as 'semi-academics' (Ducharme, 1993).

A rejection of the sub-identity of academic researcher and writer is increasingly difficult to sustain within the academy however. Although the publication expectations vary across universities, with Russell Group universities placing more value on publication than some new universities (Murray & Male, 2005), both Keen (2007) and Stone et al. (2010) point to the growing institutional pressure to publish. The university's wider view of teacher educator identity is based in part on this

positioning in respect of publication. However, the relative status of disciplines within the academy is also relevant here.

Teacher education as a practice-based discipline has historically been viewed as low status as compared with pure disciplines (Maguire, 2000), and seen as less prestigious than subjects situated within more established academic knowledge fields (Hencke, 1978). Hencke (1978) describes the proper humility demanded of practice-based academics such as teacher educators, a trait often evidenced in teacher educator's discourse around their identity within the academy. The organisational pressure for teacher educators to develop research skills and build a research and publication profile (Griffiths et al., 2010) can be an additional source of stress for teacher educators (Mullen & Kealy, 2010) who already view themselves as outside of organisational norms.

A problem with the argument posed above is its tendency to homogenise teacher educators, to assume their similarity rather than explore their differences and thus their individuality. An application of Gee's (2001) four perspectives on identity would suggest that individuals are unique in their responses to nature, institutions and others and thus have distinctive professional identities. Such a proposition has implications for my empirical work, which will need to both take account of and seek to reveal this individuality whilst simultaneously developing understandings across individual cases in order to propose more general, if tentative, conclusions. Rather than focusing on what can be learned from occupational or sociological categories, following MacLure (1993) I will focus instead on how people chose to explain themselves and their identities.

In this chapter I argue that identity is not a fixed or inflexible state but instead an activity in constant development. Individuals' identities are constituted not only by how they see themselves but also how others see them. The practices individuals undertake and the positions they occupy in society can mark them out as one kind of person or another at a given point in time. Engagement with research and academic

writing are key markers of a particular kind of professional identity within the figured world of the university. I therefore turn in the next chapter to an exploration of these linked practices.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Conceptualising the practices of research and academic writing**

In Chapter 3 I examined the concept of identity. Viewing identity as a developing rather than fixed state, I argue that engagement with research and academic writing is a key marker of a particular kind of professional identity within the figured world of the university. In this chapter, I examine the related practices of research and academic writing in order to inform the continuing development of the conceptual framework which will underpin my empirical work. This framework is presented in Chapter 5.

#### **The practice of research**

The practice of research is differently understood in the literature. A reliance on HEFCE's definition, given in Chapter 1, as underpinning an organisational approach to research is not fully supported by the prevailing discourse around research within the academy. Here, research is talked of as a potential source of income through grants and funding mechanisms and a potential source of prestige through positive contributions to the Research Excellence Framework (HEFCE, 2011b). Research is thus conceptualised as a service activity, servicing income generation or organisational prestige. Such a conceptualisation has wide-ranging implications for the identity of academics. Slaughter and Leslie (1999), for example, highlight the entrepreneurial focus now demanded of academics in a context where academic capitalism, that is, the market-like efforts to secure external funds, is not only accepted but encouraged.

Such a view of research, and research funding, as fundamental to the reputational and financial health of the academy may well have contributed to the privileging of research over other activities which make up academic work. Although flawed,

research productivity and citation rates are nevertheless seen as indicators of academic excellence and are institutionally rewarded (Fairweather, 2005; Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2011), whereas excellence in teaching historically has not been so. The focus of my interest does not lie in this restricted view of research and the product-oriented outcomes of research activity. Instead, I am interested in how the wider practice of research is understood and experienced by academics as part of a more holistic ‘package’ of academic practice.

This ‘package’ is differently conceived in the literature, as discussed fully in Chapter 2. In summary, the different activities which make up academic practice are generally understood as linked, although the nature of this link is variously conceptualised. Nixon et al.’s (1998) view of the nature of this linkage is highly relevant to the conceptualisation of research for this study. They argue that all academic activities are underpinned by the same core virtues of truthfulness, respect, authenticity and magnanimity. For academic practice to flourish, all scholarship activities need to be pursued in tandem; a lack of focus on one impacts negatively on all the others. A new light is thrown on the activity of research here. Conceptualising research as a core element of holistic academic practice (McAlpine et al., 2011) changes its status from a discrete activity which can be pursued with enthusiasm or quietly ignored to a key link in a chain of activities which together produce academic success.

Conceptualising research as one of a family of linked scholarship activities is a fundamental step in understanding academics’ various constructions of research. However, an understanding of the linkage between research and other scholarships relies on a common understanding of what research is taken to mean. This appears difficult to reach. A review of the possible causes of the range of views is helpful in illuminating the practice of research. An investigation of differing understandings of research within and across academic disciplines is one line of enquiry. Biglan (1973), for example, suggested that the variance between disciplines can be seen through three characteristics: academics’ subscription to a single or multiple paradigms, their concern over the degree to which research tackles practical problems and the nature of



their subject matter, as animate or inanimate. In his study, academics in the discipline of education were idiosyncratic over paradigmatic choices, valued research with a positive impact on practice and concerned themselves with ‘life systems’, that is, people. This work is important in its implications for an understanding of what Biglan calls the ‘cognitive style’ of scholars in the various disciplines (1973:202). Although it could be considered as a dated text, Biglan’s work continues to offer a way of understanding particular conceptions of research in Schools of Education.

Becher (1989) develops this thinking in his proposition of both a social and epistemological basis to academic communities. Thus beliefs about the nature of truth are likely to be shared within a discipline and to affect the type of research undertaken and valued. Academics within the discipline of physics, for example, are more likely to understand truth as relatively stable and attainable and to engage accordingly in quantitative, pure research. Academics within the field of education are more likely to understand truth as contested and shifting and therefore to engage in more qualitative, applied research, focusing on developing an understanding of, or impacting on, the human world.

This disciplinary analysis is appealing in its simplicity. However, in its homogenisation of academics it fails to recognise the complexity of the individual response to a discipline (Välimaa, 1998) or indeed to the research process itself (Bruce et al., 2004), something recognised by Becher and Trowler in the second edition of their work (2001). Despite these limitations, a disciplinary analysis retains some explanatory power. Thus Prosser et al. (2008) confirmed academics’ conceptions of research as related to their field of study. Interestingly, the Prosser et al. study (2008) focused on understanding differences in conceptions of the intentions of undertaking research. Here then the researcher shifts from being external to the conceptualisation of research to internal – the question becomes not, what do I understand by this activity I undertake but, what do I intend to achieve through this activity? A review of differences in researchers’ perceived self-location and intention in respect of their

research provides another lens through which to explore academics' understandings of research practice.

A continuum which at one end conceptualises research as having an external, product orientation and at the other, an internal, process orientation echoes Biglan's (1973) work and provides a helpful organising device for reviewing academics' research intentions and self-location in terms of their research (Brew, 2001b). An external orientation refers to a focus on problem-solving for others or on the public building of personal prestige, whereas an internal orientation would see research as a creative process of coming to know, as one of a number of inter-related scholarship activities, with the researcher at the centre of the process. This continuum does not suggest that academics can be placed firmly at one end or the other. Startup (1985), for example, found that academic satisfaction came mostly from their own enjoyment of the research process but that this was underpinned by an external orientation, based on an intensifying belief in the duty of academics to undertake research. Despite these limitations, it remains a useful way of organising the results from a variety of research studies. Åkerlind's (2008) proposition, for example, of four qualitatively different ways of understanding research can be helpfully positioned on this continuum, with 'fulfilling requirements' and 'establishing oneself' sited at the external orientation end of the continuum and 'developing personally' and 'enabling change' sited at the internal orientation end.

This focus on the varying impacts on the researcher of engaging in the research process is an important lens for my study. The tangible products of research for the participants in Åkerlind's (2008) study presumably remained constant – research papers were written, conference papers were delivered. However, the study demonstrates that researchers' experiences varied from passionate engagement to anxiety. This difference seemed to depend on the degree to which their intentions were internally-derived and their activity satisfied personal, rather than wholly institutional, ends. In some ways this finding was not new. Lamont (1992) discusses the importance of satisfying researchers' personal goals whilst Gordon (2005) laments

research which arises simply from a forced response to the research strategy of the organisation. Åkerlind's (2008) concentration on researcher affect – the researcher's underlying feelings about the research – is particularly powerful, however, in affirming an approach to the development of academics' research engagement which focuses on the way in which research is understood. It similarly highlights the importance of individual agency in the research process, where an increasingly internal orientation can be taken to indicate researcher maturity (Gardner, 2008).

In this study, I seek to discover the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a post-1992 School of Education. I have suggested above that individual academics will have varying ways of understanding research, based on their developing professional identity and their past experience. However, I also acknowledge that the argument for the power of the discipline in determining ways of seeing retains some relevance. I therefore move on to conceptualise the practice of research within the particular discipline of education.

### **The practice of research within the discipline of education**

It is useful to consider the potential impact of teacher educators' trajectory into the university on the practice of research within the discipline of education. Most teacher educators join the academy as a second career, following a substantial period of work as a teacher in schools. The Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011:11) have as a minimum requirement an expectation that teachers will 'demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the subject and curriculum areas and promote the value of scholarship'. Initial Teacher Education programmes now attract master's level credit, based on the requirement for trainees to undertake research as part of their curriculum. This institutional interest in teacher-led research appears to arise from a view of research as a resource for more effective teaching. Such a view is not new. Stenhouse's (1975) plea for teachers to research their own practice was driven by a

belief that teachers are in a unique position to understand their world and thus improve it. Hargreaves (1996) similarly argued for the development of an evidence-based teaching profession to underpin the improvement of practice. Interestingly, both of these arguments rest on a conceptualisation of research which foregrounds its role in improving practice. There is no central discussion here of research as a route to acquiring professional or organisational prestige.

The linking of educational research to practice development within Schools of Education could be understood as a purely pragmatic strategy, designed to combat its perceived low disciplinary status. Seen as less prestigious than subjects situated within more established academic knowledge fields (Hencke, 1978), a focus on practice removes the need for educational research to conform to the values of scientifically-based disciplines. Instead, the judgment becomes far more focused on whether the research has supported new understandings of, or changes in, practice. This conceptualisation of educational research relies on an extended understanding of what is meant by supporting practice. Support can be provided through the devising of new systems, based on systematic evaluation of the old, as exemplified in the introduction of a national curriculum for schools in 1989. It can also be provided, however, through a systematic review of literature which facilitates educational argument and critical thinking (Bassey, 1992). Indeed, Hammersely (2003) argues for the superior value of an informative aim for educational research, in contrast to an educative aim, by which he means research focused on improving educational practice.

The focus on practice in educational research is central to academics' conceptions of their professional identity. In Chapter 1 I make the argument that the practice-based focus of their research is not always highly valued within the wider university. This could be problematic in terms of these academics' views of their academic status. It raises questions such as, can an academic in a School of Education be a 'proper academic' and retain practice-based values and purposes? Is their self-construction as 'semi-academics' (Ducharme, 1993) in fact valid? As argued in Chapter 2, a key

function of writing and publication is to enable academics to have a voice in society and to exert influence over issues which they care about. The extent to which academics have a self-view as public intellectuals, as individuals who have a right and even a responsibility to have a voice within their field appears to be linked to these understandings of and relationship with research. It is to the nature of this link between research and academic writing that I therefore now turn.

### **The link between research and academic writing**

A key characteristic of research is that it results in insights which are shared with others (HEFCE, 2011a; Stenhouse, 1981). Such insights can be shared in a variety of ways. Technological developments have led to the increased use of multimedia solutions to disseminating knowledge. However, the customary way to share research findings remains through the use of words, predominantly through the publishing of an academic argument in the form of a book, a book chapter or journal articles. Publication in this form has two main functions. It presents work for criticism and hence refinement and makes possible the building of knowledge through dissemination (Stenhouse, 1981). It has been argued that research can be validated in ways other than the process of peer review and critique which are a key feature of this publication process. Stenhouse (1981), for example, argues that action research can be both shared and evaluated through enactment; that is, through evaluating the impact of the research in action. Similarly Kvale (1995), in arguing for an acceptance of the pragmatic validity of research, highlights ways in which notions of validity are socially constructed. Despite these challenges, the peer review process remains dominant. Equally dominant is the demand for a particular form of writing in research publications, that of academic writing. It is to a conceptualisation of this practice that I now turn.

## **The practice of academic writing**

The practice of writing combines both process and product (Kottkamp, 1990). When we write, we capture our thoughts in a product, a piece of writing, which can fulfil many purposes: to act as a record, to support reflection, to be refined and re-written. Emig (1977:124) sees writing as our 'representation of the world made visible'. It allows us to make meaning of the world and to share this meaning with others. However, Emig claims that this meaning-making may not necessarily occur only prior to the writing process. Instead, the very act of writing supports humans in undertaking the intense thinking processes through which meaning is made. This view of writing as a facilitator of thinking provides a basis for Creme and Lea's (2008) writing support programme for students. Here, writing is seen as having an educative power through its stimulation of reflection. This position is extended by Richardson (2003), with her view of writing as an enquiry process in itself, revealing to the writer things about their area of focus and about themselves. This revelation is not simply due to the depth of the reflective process required in the production of a coherent written text. The act of writing encourages the activities of cognitive growth (Bruner, 1996; Langer & Applebee, 1987) and practice development (Shteiman et al., 2010). In studies conducted by Aitchison and Lee (2006) and Foxcroft (2009), writing was evaluated as not simply an adjunct to the growth of knowledge but as a foundational element in the knowledge development process.

Academic writing in the academy is undertaken by two groups, students and academic staff. Although my focus is on writing undertaken by academics, and in particular, academics within a School of Education, I begin my exploration of academic writing here by examining research on student writing. Such research is more prevalent than that on staff writing. Its arguments serve to provide some helpful theoretical approaches to explore the writing practices of academics.

Subscribing to a belief in the power of writing to support learning would surely ensure a central place for academic writing in the university students' curriculum. Teachers

would use writing as an educative tool, offering ‘writing to learn’ assignments, such as journals, drafts, and in-class collaboratively written pieces, to support students in developing their understanding of their focus area (McLeod & Maimon, 2000). Unfortunately, such writing opportunities are currently rare. Students are more likely to recognise the use of written assignments as a test of learning, with the teacher acting as judge rather than mentor. Here, students are expected to write in a way which conforms to the norms of the university. The inability of many to fulfil this expectation leads to the construction of students’ academic writing as a ‘problem’ within the academy. An exploration of the nature and implications of this problem not only throws light on students’ writing practices but also points towards a greater understanding of the writing practices of the academics who teach them.

### **The ‘problem’ of students’ academic writing practices within the university**

Discourses around the current problem of students’ academic writing at university need to be understood in the light of social and political changes influencing university intakes in the 1990s. As discussed in Chapter 2, political imperatives to develop a universal higher education system resulted in an increasingly diverse student intake. The number of international students within British universities has risen steadily in the last two decades, with approximately 500,000 international students now studying in Britain (Buchanan, 2013). Equally, the widening access agenda has meant that students from a wide range of educational backgrounds are now studying in UK universities. Given this shift in intake profile, the increased proportion of students who struggle to fulfil the writing demands of their course is unsurprising. Writing may be the natural domain of the ‘traditional’ student but for those who fall outside of this, it can provide a much greater challenge.

Three approaches to understanding and tackling these student writing issues dominate. The first, the skills approach, arises from a view of the student as deficient in the skills to write in the manner validated by the academy and assumes the problem of student

writing to be simply textual (Wingate, 2006). Based on a normative model of acceptable academic writing, the student is supported in acquiring the skills needed to write in the manner demanded of potential graduates. The extent to which the student succeeds in adopting textual norms, as defined by the organisation, is judged through assessments; the student is asked to write assignments which are then judged against set criteria. This technicist approach to developing student literacy pays heed neither to the conflicts which students may experience between what is required of them, within and across disciplines in the university, nor to their previous literacy experiences. Writing is conceptualised as a purely cognitive process, divorced from the experience, values and commitments of its author (Clark & Ivanic, 1997).

The second approach, academic socialisation, is derived from a similar understanding of the problem of student writing. Here, students' diverse backgrounds are acknowledged as relevant to the development of dexterity in academic writing. However, the richness of alternative language structures and norms is deemed an issue rather than a resource. It could be argued that the university's power to decide on acceptable norms comes from its power to judge academic success – the university sets the rules by which the student will be judged to have or have not performed in an acceptable way to gain a degree. Such normalising pushes against creativity as attempts are made to marginalise previous language experience and to socialise students into the discourses and genres appropriate to a particular discipline or disciplines. Hyland (2002) terms this an attempt to homogenise students, taking little account of their individuality and authentic voice and attempting to turn them into 'acceptable' writers as judged against the accepted way of writing within the academy. Lea and Street (1998) develop Hyland's position, suggesting that, in treating writing as a transparent medium, socialisation approaches fail to address issues raised by this demand to produce and represent meaning only in terms acceptable to the organisation. A socialisation approach may have been valuable when the elite studied for single honours degrees under the tutelage of a personal mentor (Ivanic & Lea, 2006). Its potential for success is severely weakened, however, in the current context of mass higher education. Indeed, its pursuit may well lead to inauthentic academic



writing (Mitchell & Evison, 2006), with students mimicking what they assume to be the writing style of academics within their discipline.

An attempt to take account of the whole context in which text is produced underpins the third approach to understanding the problem of student writing. Introduced in 1998 by Lea and Street in a much cited text, the academic literacies critical framework has greatly influenced the theorising of academic writing in UK universities. Lea and Street see literacies as social practices to be understood rather than a set of skills to be acquired or accepted discourses to be socialised into. Thus constructed, writing becomes an activity which is used to make meaning, with text viewed as the result of a particular social process – an individual writing within a context – rather than an object which can be understood in isolation from the context of its production (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Writing within the academy becomes a social and communal process, taking place within an organisation which itself is a site of power and which, Ivanic and Lea (2006) claim, defines both what counts as knowledge and an acceptable way to express it. The students' authentic voice is potentially denied, whilst they are required to conform to the norms and values of those who will make judgements on them. The act of writing is thus seen to have ontological implications – students are asked to define who they are through their writing in ways which fall within the acceptable boundaries defined by powerful organisational norms (Lea & Street, 1998). Such forced definition may well result in ideological conflicts and the challenging of previously-held identities (Ivanic, 1998).

A number of concerns around academic writing can be derived from these different ways of conceptualising the writing process. Writing can be seen as power, with writers reproducing or challenging the dominant practices. It can be seen as identity, with the writing process not simply being about the transmission of content but about the representation of self (Ivanic, 1998). It can also be seen as an act of inspection (Foucault, 1977), with writers made knowable and hence open to judgement through what they reveal. The 'problem' of academics' writing practices is now considered in the light of these principles.

## **The ‘problem’ of academics’ writing practices within the university**

Although imagined to be proficient and confident writers, in actuality some academics face many of the same issues confronting students. The writing ‘problem’ for academics, as for students, could be seen to focus on their ability to write in a way which is acceptable to the academy. Much of the literature on writing development for academics adopts the same deficit, skills-based model seen in student writing interventions, with writing viewed as a series of technical skills to be mastered, (Elbow & Belanoff, 2000; Lee & Boud, 2003; Moore, 2003; Murray & Moore, 2006; Bolton, 2010). As in the case of students, such interventions fail to take account of the organisational context in which writing takes place and the complexities of the writing process (Morss & Murray, 2001). Academics need to write in order to secure one source of legitimate capital (Bourdieu, 1997) within the university, that of publication (Archer, 2008). In the practice of publication, the worthiness of an individual’s writing is established through a peer review process, where what is written is tested against the understandings of experts in a particular field in order to determine its potential contribution to knowledge. Academic associations such as The British Education Research Association (BERA), the REF process and the peer review process which underpins journal publication, thus combine to narrow what is acceptable academic writing.

This process, and the dominance of the excellence discourse which supports it, assumes agreement over what is of value, both in terms of publication activity and the nature of what is published. In so doing, Houston et al. (2010) argue, it disempowers colleagues whose value-base is at odds with the research community. Such misalignment is prevalent amongst academics in Schools of Education who often join the university after a successful career in school. LaRocco and Bruns (2006) propose this as a difficult route into academia, involving entry into a new community of practice at a late stage in the career cycle. The challenge to the self which this can cause may well be exacerbated by the demand to produce publications which fit organisational demands. Socialisation (Mead, 1934), the opportunity to work

alongside experienced colleagues as an introduction into the community of practice of the academy, is offered as a way to overcome these difficulties. However, as in the case of students, this seemingly simple solution merits critical analysis.

The communities of practice literature offers an interesting perspective on the workings of socialisation in an organisational context. As discussed more fully in Chapter 3, Lave and Wenger (1991) use the concept of legitimate peripheral participation to describe how experienced colleagues support the development of newcomers' professional aptitudes and organisational relationships through offering access to accepted practice. Here they are given, for example, the opportunity to learn the organisational and cultural norms which underpin workplace writing (Davies & Birbili, 2000). An immediate obstacle for novice academic writers in a university context is the lack of availability of 'visible' adepts. Experienced writers exist of course, but writing is often done alone, outside of day to day workplace activity. There is no one to 'sit beside' and learn from. Moreover, the skills, knowledge and understanding implicit in the practice of academic writing are often tacit (Polyani, 1966). It requires adepts who can articulate to novices not only how to write but how to find value in writing if they are to be successful in this new endeavour (Becker, 1953). It appears that it is not always as easy to make the smooth move from novice to adept as Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest then. The shared repertoire and mutual endeavour which characterise the apprentice mode of learning are often missing from the relationship between novice and expert writer, with isolation and mismatch in underpinning ideologies often reported by those seeking to learn (Gourlay, 2011).

In addition to these practical difficulties, collegial learning can have a dark side, apparently overlooked by Lave and Wenger (1991) in their benign version of the learning process. Barton and Tusting's (2005) discussion of issues of power, conflict and exclusion are largely dismissed by the communities of practice literature, as discussed in Chapter 3. Given the main impetus of socialisation to be ensuring the fit of the individual into organisational norms, power appears initially to reside firmly with the organisation (Weidman & Stein, 2003). Writing development practices

which are based on the socialisation model may therefore simply force academics into writing in the acceptable style pre-determined by those in positions of power (Clark & Ivanic, 1997; Lea & Street, 1998).

Given this context of power and control, the academic literacies critical framework has equal relevance for theorising the writing practices of academics within the university context as it has for students. Indeed, academic literacy theorists acknowledge writing as an issue for all members of the university, as they try to adjust to new writing discourses (Ganobcsik-Williams, 2006). The cause of this difficulty appears to be ontological. It is obvious that autobiographical writing draws heavily on a sense of who we are. However, all writing draws to some degree on the writer's drive to convey to others who they are, what they think and believe (Clark & Ivanic, 1997). Writing is not only about conveying this sense of self, however, but also about developing it. Writing helps the author to develop both a discursal self, the self they become through the words they write, and their sense of themselves as author (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005; Bakhtin, 1981). Writing also helps a writer to influence who they are in their professional context (Lea & Stierer, 2009). Thus, engaging proactively in academic writing may support teacher educators in developing the academic identity they seek.

Although initially persuasive, this argument is weakened by its failure to recognise sufficiently that the academy has its own identity-making powers. We may well be 'what we write' (Hyland, 2007:22), but the bounds of this identity are to some degree constrained by the organisation in which we work. The socio-cultural context in which our writing takes place has a significant influence on our possible identities as writers. Writers can only be what they are allowed to be within the confines of the academy (Ivanic, 1998). The introduction of the plural term, academic literacies, is relevant here. It suggests that it is not only the written word which academics need to be proficient at managing. They also require the capacity to negotiate the complex conditions within academia which will either support their writing or judge it to be inadequate (Hyland, 2007).

This view of writing as a complex set of situated activities raises the possibility, as Lea and Street (1998) suggest, of affective and ideological conflicts which may well impact on the development of an academic's identity within the academy. Denying writers the opportunity to publish accounts of research in their chosen field in a creative way which is meaningful to them diminishes their view of themselves as a valuable academic in that field and curtails their ability to contribute to its development. The unequal distribution of the right to publish then results in the minority determining what is known (Kress, 1983, in Clark and Ivanic, 1997). Writers may attempt to counter this negative view by constructing themselves as gaining power through supporting organisational values and practices (Morgan, 1986). However, all writing has the potential for individual exposure. Foucault's (1977) view of the construction of individuals through mechanisms of examination leads to a more uncomfortable interpretation. For Foucault, by revealing our thoughts and passions, writers render themselves more knowable and therefore more controllable. As academics, we might need to weigh the developmental and identity-building opportunities afforded us by writing against the organisational opportunities for individual classification (Lee & Boud, 2003) and the implicit measurement of our worth (Kamler, 2008).

### **A summary**

I am interested in researcher affect, that is, the way in which the wider practice of research is understood and experienced by academics in a School of Education. I have argued in this chapter that a conceptualisation of research as one of a family of linked scholarship activities is most valuable in the development of an understanding of academics' constructions of research activity. Academics' underlying feelings about research appear to influence their confidence in disseminating research through the medium of writing for publication. I have suggested that an application of the academic literacies framework to academics' writing practices, demonstrating the nature of writing as a social practice, provides the most helpful theoretical basis for an

exploration of the complexities of academic writing within an organisational context. I move on in the following chapter to use the insights derived from this and the previous two chapters to develop a conceptual framework which illustrates my current understanding of the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. I use this conceptual framework to underpin the development of the design of my empirical work in Chapter 6.

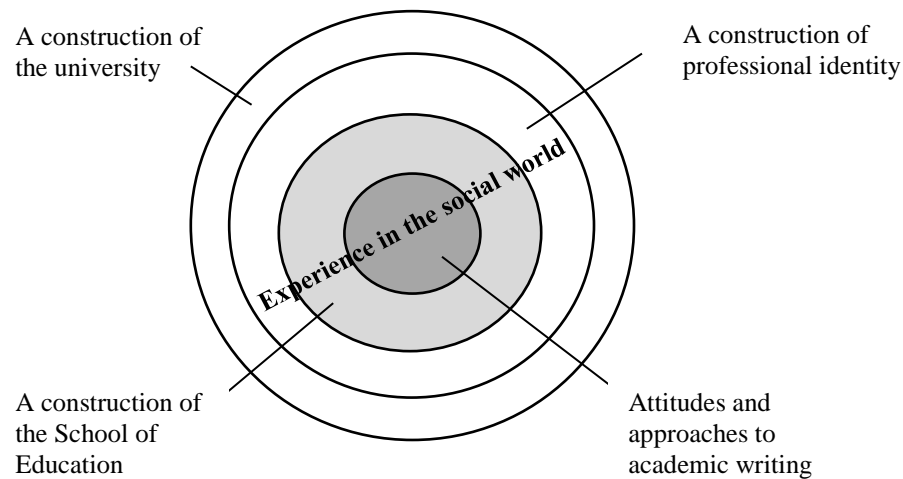
## **Chapter 5**

### **Clarifying a framework to guide my empirical work**

In the previous three chapters I explored concepts, ideas and practices that have the potential to explain the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. This chapter summarises my theoretical perspective, presenting a tentative theory on this relationship. In so doing, it draws on the more detailed argument proposed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. The aim here is to construct a way of looking which supports my research approach. A series of research tools are used to support this approach. The first of these tools is the over-arching organising framework shown in Figure 5.1 below. It is important to note at this juncture the provisional status of this organising framework. It captures an early attempt to suggest the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. The framework was subsequently amended and re-presented in Chapter 10, following the insights gained through my empirical work. The decision to retain this initial, flawed framework in this chapter rests on my belief in the imperative to authentically present the research process as it unfolded, rather than to engineer a more purified version of what is essentially a messy process of discovery.

The initial framework presented in Figure 5.1 is formed by a series of concentric circles. This shape suggests a multi-dimensional relationship between influencing factors. This is in contrast to the use of a series of arrows which would have implied a cause and effect relationship. Although such a relationship has some relevance to my study, it diminishes the complex interplay between the factors which impact on academics' responses to the challenge of academic writing. Instead of such a cause and effect relationship, I suggest there is a more interactive, shifting, relationship

between the factors which influence academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing.



**Figure 5.1** An organising framework showing influencing factors on academics' attitudes and approaches to academic writing

The term 'Experience in the social world' runs through the centre of this framework. I see the social world not as fixed but in a constant process of construction and re-construction, based on activity and interaction. Within this social world, there are a number of inter-related factors which influence academics' conceptions of their professional identity. Although acting on one another in a complex interplay, factors are artificially separated in this organising framework for the purpose of discussion below.



## **The influence of the university**

The organising framework shown in Figure 5.1 above uses the term ‘A construction of the university’ as one factor which influences academics’ conceptions of their professional identity. This term points to the importance of the way in which the world of the university is constructed or ‘figured’, that is, understood, by those within it. The purpose of the university can be constructed in a number of different ways by those who work within it, as discussed fully in Chapter 2. They may see its purpose as educative, either in terms of preparing individuals for occupational roles needed by society or industry or in the wider sense of higher learning. They may view it as focusing on knowledge creation, for its own sake and for the sake of society. Conversely, they could see its importance as lying in the development of citizenship or the reproduction of the social order. Whilst not mutually exclusive, the primacy which individuals give to certain aspects of the role of the university has clear implications for their perceived role within it. The concept of academic scholarships (Boyer, 1990) helpfully labels the overlapping elements of the academic practice role as discovery (seeking to build new knowledge), integration (seeking to interpret knowledge across disciplines), application (developing understanding for and through society) and teaching (developing understandings with and through others). However, individuals clearly do not have a free choice as to the importance they place on discrete scholarships within their professional role. Despite the validity of Biglan’s (1973) characterisation of education as a soft-applied discipline, concerned with the development of professional practice, the university itself has a mission and objectives to achieve which may demand a different set of interests from its academics. Academics are the key levers to achieve these objectives and could therefore be seen to be subject to organisational control.

The concepts of structure and agency, as discussed by Giddens (1984), help to problematise this relationship. Giddens (1984) argues for the duality of structure and agency, where structure and agency are seen as complementary. In this conception, humans draw on structures in order to act, and, in acting, impact on structures. As

discussed in Chapter 3, in adopting this view, I am using ‘structure’ to describe arrangements within the university which both arise from and influence individual action. I am using ‘agency’ to reference academics’ ability to act to change something, to be agential. I see academics as having the potential to be agential, despite what may appear to be the dominance of structural power in terms of organisational norms, values and practices. Following Archer (2003), I argue that the human capacity to act strategically to avoid structural impediments or to capitalise on structural enablers is strengthened through the exercise of reflexivity. In adopting a reflexive approach, academics can question their own natural responses and come to new, enabling understandings and increased self-efficacy beliefs.

Academics’ conception of the university clearly has the potential to be an influencing factor on their conceptions of their professional identity. However, I argue that the School in which they are located is also a key influence.

### **The influence of the School of Education**

Academics entering Schools of Education generally come from a background of school teaching. Their dominant view of themselves as a professional is as a teacher. As argued in Chapter 3, such a view draws upon previously-secured capital, producing a particular habitus (Bourdieu, 1997), a system of values and beliefs, which individuals bring with them to the academy. The academy also has its own habitus however, its own system of values and expectations of those who work within it. These two value-systems may not necessarily align. The values and ways of being of the School of Education, rather than the wider university, may therefore initially appear more familiar to teacher educators.

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation illuminates the ways in which experienced education colleagues provide newcomers with the opportunity to learn practices which support the development of new teacher

educators' professional aptitudes and organisational relationships. Although useful, I would argue that the complexities of this socialisation method need to be further considered. A detailed critique of socialisation in the context of the university is given in Chapter 4. Of particular relevance here is the need to find adepts who can explore with novices the value of a new experience (Becker, 1953), in this case, the experience of writing. Moreover, such an approach pre-supposes a shared repertoire and mutual goals which, as Gourlay (2011) suggests, cannot be assumed. Many of the academics moving into Schools of Education in Gourlay's study instead experienced feelings of confusion, inauthenticity and isolation, with commonly-understood priorities and ways of working being largely absent.

The academic world into which individuals are socialised, although malleable, is to some degree already set, with positions of power previously conferred. Equally, Schools of Education are not populated by homogenous academics, all with the same set of values and beliefs about their role. Instead, they consist of individuals with divergent views on the nature of academic practice. The practices which individuals become socialised into are therefore to some degree fortuitous, depending on allocation to teams or to a particular shared work-space. Alternatively, they may be based on more generic reference points.

Such generic reference points are to be found in the professionalism discourse, in particular, the distinction between restricted and extended professionals (Hoyle, 1975). Restricted professionals are held to value the day to day work of teaching, rely on intuition and sustain a classroom-based perspective. Extended professionals adopt an active approach to understanding professional needs and how to address them through enhanced communication with peers and engagement with theory. Academics within a School of Education could have a restrictive or extended view of themselves as professionals. What is deemed 'normal' may be retaining a focus on teaching and classroom activity, with minimal engagement with other professionals or with theory. It could, conversely, be understood as full engagement with research and writing and with the communities of practice which sustain such activity. Some may understand

the norm to lie between these two extremes. Whatever an individual's conception, I suggest that this has an impact on their view of their professional identity.

### **Professional identity as a mediating factor**

I have proposed the way in which individuals construct the university and the School of Education as an important influencing factor on academics' conceptions of their professional identity. I now propose this conception of identity to have an important mediating influence on academics' attitudes and approaches to academic writing.

Such a proposition rests on an understanding of identity as flexible and developing rather than pre-determined and fixed. I have argued in Chapter 3 that the university and School have identity-shaping powers and that the individual has the capacity to resist this. The power of the discipline in which academics are situated may also be relevant. The identity-shaping power of colleagues is also a key consideration however. A discursal perspective on identity suggests that identity is not institutionally defined but is determined by encounters with other individual actors (Gee, 2001). Thus academics in a School of Education may wish to be seen as the same as some people and different from others. The impact of figured worlds (see page 61) on individual identities comes from their focus on activity. They are made and re-made through what people do or do not do. Others can then look at what is done and decide if they are part of that world or not, if they have an affinity to the individuals there or are different from them. I suggest that this affinity connection has a strong values base. Aligning oneself with those who share a belief in the primacy of commitment to students above research activity for example helps academics to make sense of what they do and how they see their place in the university. It may also diminish their sense of power in an organisation in which research is seen to be of prime value. The REF, for example, could be seen as an 'othering' tool, an instrument which allows one set of people to belittle another through their perceived weakness (Johnson et al., 2004). The dominance of tools such as the REF in university

structures may well militate against the development of a strong research identity in academics who have not produced outputs deemed appropriate for submission.

### **Attitudes and approaches to research and academic writing**

I propose that the way in which academics conceive of their identity is a crucial mediating factor in their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. Engagement with research, and the academic writing which arises from it, are key markers of a particular kind of professional identity within the university. In Chapter 4 I propose locating research as one of a number of activities which make up a package of academic work as a way to normalise research activity. However, despite increasing organisational pressure to research and publish, research remains an alien activity to many academics in post-1992 Schools of Education. An exploration of divergence in research intentions offers a way to challenge this. Brew's (2001b) research continuum, moving from an external, product orientation for research towards an internal, process orientation is a helpful tool for surfacing academics' research intentions and self-location. Here, research can be seen not simply as the fulfilment of an organisational requirement to be productive or research active as judged through processes such as the REF, but instead as an essential activity of intellectuals, based on individual principles and one's values as a scholar.

Academics' lack of confidence in writing for publication may be linked to these understandings of, and relationships with, research. Writing remains the dominant mode of sharing the results of research activity. Academics in Schools of Education often feel that they are unable to write in a way which is acceptable to the academy. As discussed in Chapter 4, the prevalent skills approach to solving this problem fails to take account of the organisational context in which writing takes place. Academics need to write in order to secure one source of legitimate capital (Bourdieu, 1997) within the university, that of publication. The university, and the wider research community of which it is a part, have firm views on what is of value, both in terms of

publication activity and the nature of what is published, which may not align with academics' own values. Capital could be gained of course by the individual focusing not on their personal values but on how to become more attuned with those of the organisation. The process of socialisation, made manifest through induction activities for example, may well be helpful in this regard. However, this is to ignore both the difficulty of rendering tacit knowledge such as writing practices visible and, more importantly, the potential for a mismatch in ideology between novice and expert. The balance of power is similarly based firmly with the organisation as individuals attempt to fit the university norms. Given this context of power and control, the academic literacies critical framework has significant explanatory potential.

This critical framework sees literacies as social practices to be understood rather than a set of skills to be acquired or accepted discourses to be socialised into (Lea & Street, 1998). Thus constructed, writing becomes an activity which is used to make meaning, with text viewed as the result of a particular social process – an individual writing within a context – rather than an object which can be understood in isolation from the context of its production (Lillis & Scott, 2007). This view of writing as a complex set of situated activities raises the possibility, as Lea and Street (1998) suggest, of affective and ideological conflicts which may well impact on the development of an academic's identity within the academy. Denying writers the opportunity to publish accounts of what they deem to be valuable research in their chosen field could do much to diminish their view of themselves as a respected academic in that field and curtail their ability to contribute to its development.

The suitability of traditional, and potentially limiting, models for communicating discoveries from research in the academy is also raised. The changing priorities of universities in terms of knowledge transfer, partnership work and outreach, together with a focus on research impact, suggest that the journal article's position as the gold standard of research communication should perhaps now be challenged. All writing, even in new forms, has the potential for individual exposure, for classification and control (Foucault, 1977). The potential impact of such classification on academics'

attitudes towards writing and their wider professional selves should be considered. I suggest that an application of the academic literacies framework to academics' writing practices, demonstrating the nature of writing as a social practice, provides a useful theoretical basis for an exploration of the relationship between academics' conception of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing within the context of a School of Education in a post-1992 university.

The argument posed above tends towards a homogenisation of academics within Schools of Education, assuming their similarity rather than exploring their differences and thus their individuality. An application of Gee's (2001) four perspectives on identity would suggest that individuals are unique in their responses to institutions and others and thus have distinctive professional identities. Such a proposition has implications for my empirical work, which will need both to take account of and seek to reveal this individuality whilst simultaneously developing understandings across individual cases in order to propose more general, if tentative, conclusions. Rather than focusing on what can be learned from occupational or sociological categories, I will focus instead on how people chose to explain themselves and their identities.

### **The use of the conceptual framework in my empirical work**

The conceptual framework presented above represents a theory of the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a post-1992 university. This framework was developed to be tested and refined through my empirical work. It is not definitive but represents my understanding prior to my data collection of the relationships between the central concepts in my study. The diagram in Figure 5.2 below is the second explanatory tool which I offer as a way of highlighting the key concepts in the argument posed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 and summarised above.

**A construction of the university**

*Master explanatory concepts:*

- Figured worlds
- Academic scholarships
- Structure and agency

*Subsidiary explanatory concepts:*

- Reflexivity
- Self-efficacy

**A construction of professional identity**

*Master explanatory concepts:*

- Identity fluidity
- Discoursal identity
- Affinity identity
- Restricted and extended professionalism

*Subsidiary explanatory concepts:*

- Disciplinary identity

**A construction of the School of Education**

*Master explanatory concepts:*

- Figured worlds
- Capital
- Habitus
- Restricted and extended professionalism

*Subsidiary explanatory concepts:*

- Legitimate peripheral participation

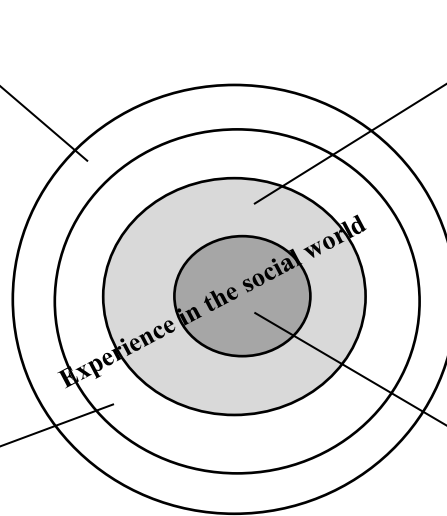
**Attitudes and approaches to academic writing**

*Master explanatory concepts:*

- Academic socialisation
- Academic literacies

*Subsidiary explanatory concepts:*

- Socialisation



**Figure 5.2** A conceptual framework showing master and subsidiary concepts relevant to an explanation of the relationship between academics' conception of their academic identity and attitudes and approaches to academic writing

In developing this framework I adopted Hargreaves' (2001) approach of identifying master concepts and subsidiary concepts. Master concepts support the first layer of my understanding of my area of focus. Subsidiary concepts help to make sense of the master concepts and allow a second, deeper layer of understanding. Whilst concepts are allocated to the quadrant in which I propose they have a high explanatory value, nevertheless they are often relevant in one or more of the other quadrants. The concept of structure and agency, for example, has explanatory relevance not only for the construction of the university, where it is currently sited, but in the other three quadrants. The use of the concentric circles is an attempt to signal this incorporation



of concepts across quadrants. However, it has to be accepted that this diagrammatic representation overs-simplifies complex connections and relationships. The use of the framework in my empirical work took account of these insufficiencies.

I used this framework and the results of my empirical work to develop my understanding of the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing, discussed in Chapters 8, 9 and 10. This understanding is then used, in Chapter 11, to suggest ways in which policy and practice might be amended to allow academics to strengthen their belief in themselves as intellectuals and to become purposeful and productive academic writers. Whilst posing some challenge to the wider roles of the university as currently understood, this will, I believe, support the fulfilment of the first responsibility of the university as originally conceived, namely, the development and sharing of ideas for the purpose of intellectual and societal development.

This framework indicates the centrality of participants' understanding of the figured worlds which make up their professional context. It also indicates the importance of participants' understanding of their professional identity and its impact on their understanding of their professional identity and academic practices. My main and subsidiary research questions, articulated in Chapter 1, were also crafted to ensure that this focus on individual understanding is upheld.

This conceptual framework had implications for the design of my research approach. I used it to set boundaries for the study and limits for my data gathering. My empirical work equally supported me in revising the conceptual framework in order to develop a theory around the conceptions I propose. The layered approach adopted in my conceptual framework led to a similarly layered approach to my research process. I explore these layers, and the connections between them, in Chapter 6.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Designing a research approach**

Within this doctoral study I sought both to explore and theorise the way in which particular academics, those working in a School of Education in a post-1992 university, conceive their professional identity. I wished to explore how this conception informs their attitudes and approaches to engaging in academic writing. Such a theory would inform my own and my organisation's understanding of how to support academics in developing as purposeful and productive academic writers. It would also potentially be a valuable addition to the general field of research in this area. This chapter proposes a particular research design which I argue best supported me in realising this purpose.

I repeat here the acknowledgement of my own position as a new academic and a relatively new writer, made in Chapter 1. I do not stand outside of this research but am central to it on a number of levels. On one level, this centrality arises from my development of the research design and therefore my control over questions to be raised and the areas deemed valid to explore through it. More fundamentally it arises from my connection as a colleague to those whose world I have studied, and my sharing of their position as a person struggling to find myself as an academic and as a writer. The complexity of this connection, including its ethical implications and its explicit impact on choices made within my research design, is considered in this chapter.

### **Conceptualising the layers of my research approach**

My conceptualisation of the research process was initially influenced by Crotty's (1998) account of the usual hierarchy of methodology, leading to method, leading to

tools used to action the method. Drawing on this hierarchy, I use the term methodology to mean the strategy or approach lying behind my methods; that is, an approach drawn from my philosophical position in relation to knowledge and reality and my principles and values in relation to the research process. I use the term methods to mean the techniques used to gather and analyse data, which I use to illuminate my research question. However, my experience in designing and undertaking research projects has shown this neat, linear connection between the influences on and dimensions of the research process to be inadequate. Therefore, following Saunders et al., (2007), I use the metaphor of an onion to demonstrate the complex layers of my research process and to suggest a more nuanced understanding of the way in which each aspect of the research process draws from and influences others. This relationship is shown in Figure 6.1 below.

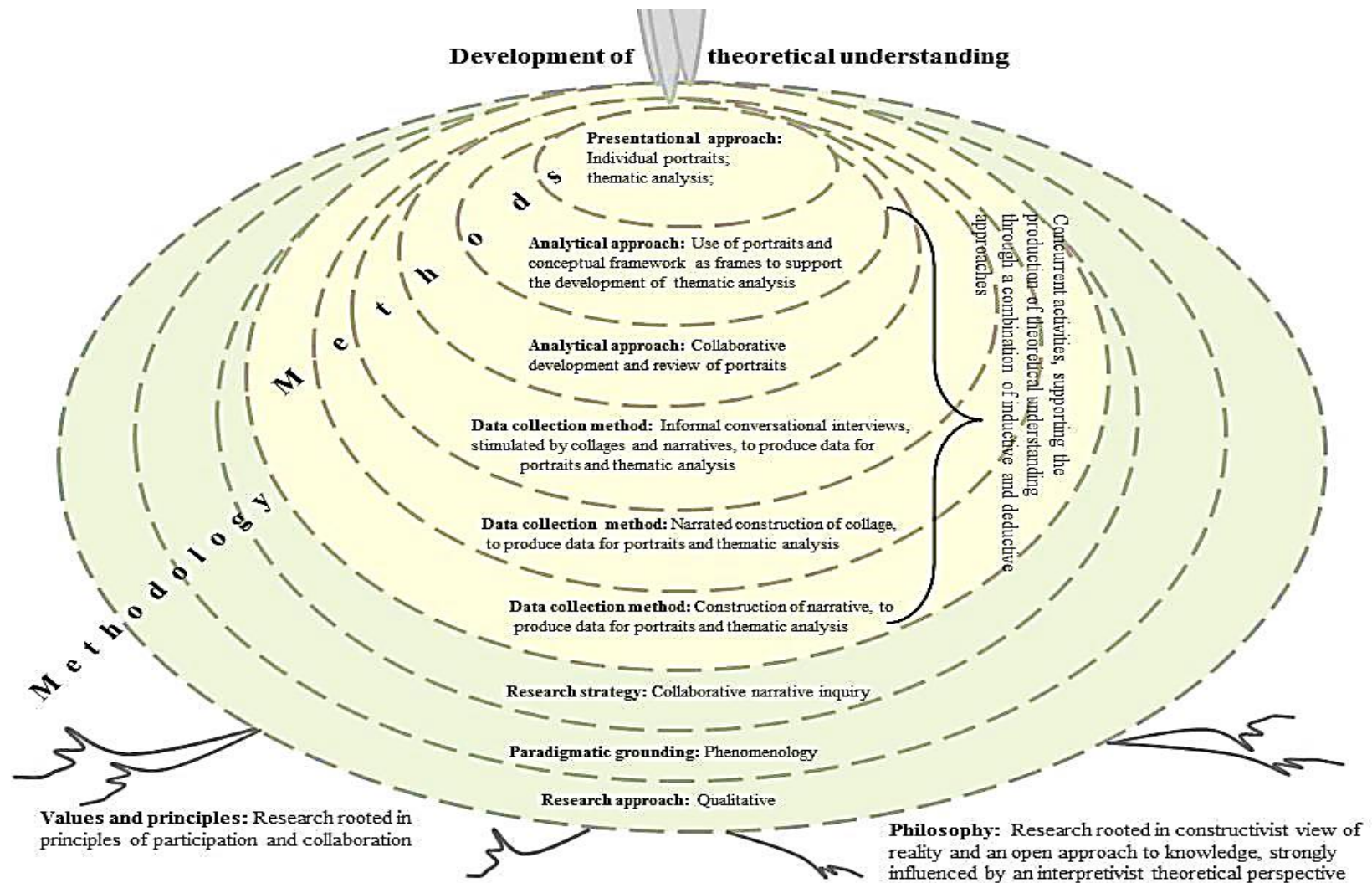
The onion metaphor is conceptually useful. Methodology is shown to encapsulate methods. The semi-permeable layers of onion skin, indicated by broken lines, symbolise the inter-connectedness of all elements of the research design and process. The influences of methodology on method are signalled, as are the links between their component parts. Following Harper's example (2003), the justification of my research approach rests primarily on its appropriateness in supporting my understanding of possible answers to the questions I pose. In this chapter, I explore each layer of my research onion, justifying choices made through their potential value in this endeavour.

### **The context of my research**

My guiding question and the research approach I adopted to answer it were both influenced by the context in which this question arose. This context is explored in depth in Chapter 1. In summary, the empirical field for my research was constituted by my colleagues, working within a School of Education in a post-1992 university, where the expectation to write and publish is becoming greater in an increasingly

complex HE environment. I am central to this empirical field of study. I am an insider researcher. As a member of the School of Education and a developing writer myself, I have not only a direct connection to the research setting but am a member of the academic community I investigated. There are strong arguments both for the negatives of insider research, seen as having the propensity for biased, subjective analysis, and the positive impact of institutional situated knowledge in supporting insights gained (Lea & Street, 1998). Rather than try to avoid this complexity through separating myself from my subjects, I acknowledge my centrality to this research and use an ongoing reflexive approach to explore the implications of this positioning for the research design.

A need to acknowledge the socially situated and partial nature of my research, as revealed above, is one such implication. Following Hammersley (2000) I wanted to ensure that the research I undertook was authentic and transparent, with choices made, honestly justified. Patton (2002) suggests a move towards researcher ‘neutrality’ as fundamental to securing such research authenticity. The use of this term is challenging, given my view of the unavoidability, and indeed benefits, of subjectivity. Patton’s ‘neutrality’ does not equate with a search for objectivity however. Rather, it proposes the adoption of a research approach which does not set out to prove or disprove a specific reality, but which supports the researcher in her attempts to understand the world revealed by the data. It is this neutral response which I sought. I am not suggesting here that the worldview which I brought to the process did not impact on my neutrality. Rather, I am proposing an acknowledgment of my philosophy, built on my ontological and epistemological beliefs, as fundamental to an authentic research process in which my own, unescapable position is acknowledged, reflected on and taken account of.



**Figure 6.1** Conceptualising the layers of my research approach: the research onion

## **The grounding of a research approach: my philosophy**

As advised by Crotty (1998), the logic of my methodological choices was rooted in my philosophy. I have a constructivist view of reality as socially determined, with developing meanings emanating from social interaction rather than being a fixed truth to be discovered (Cresswell, 2009). I similarly accept Mead's (1934) view of identity itself as a social construction rather than a fixed and inflexible entity. This leads to my view of professional identity as neither static nor fully knowable, but a malleable construction, produced in part through self-view and the views of others.

I am clear in my view of the socially constructed nature of reality. My view of the nature of knowledge is less assured. I contend that we cannot know the social world in the same way we know the natural world. In the social world, the explanatory causality which can be used in the natural world often does not apply. One thing does not necessarily always lead to the same other. It depends on who you are and the context you are in. To understand other people requires taking account of the meaning they give to what they are doing, through awareness and empathy, an approach termed interpretivist by Crotty (1998). However, I see some things as more straightforwardly 'knowable' than others. The level of publication of colleagues, as indicated by the number of journal articles they produce in a given year, can be counted and thus 'known'. The meaning of these articles, the impact of their publication on, for example, individual self-view and esteem is less knowable, in that it is both variable and emergent. I find Woods' (2005:47) proposal of an 'open approach to knowledge', allowing a more fluid understanding of the nature of what can be known at any point in time, more helpful in describing my position.

In summary then, my intention to study individuals' self-constructed realities and the implication of those realities for their working lives drew on a social constructivist view of reality. Following Pring (2000), my intention as a researcher was not to attempt a revelation of an elusive fixed truth but instead to reveal and interpret the multiple realities implied in how others understand the worlds in which they live. In

this case, I am interested in how my colleagues see the worlds of the university and the School of Education, the resultant impact on their conception of their professional identity and the mediating effect of this self-view on their academic writing practices. I understand that my knowledge of the views of others can only be partial (Bryman, 2004). There is no single experience of becoming an academic in a School of Education. Instead, there are innumerable understandings of this reality, constructed by each individual who experiences this ‘becoming’. My interpretivist stance allows me to acknowledge and attempt to understand these different meanings.

### **The first layer of the onion: a rationale for a qualitative approach**

A qualitative methodology is both what appealed to me and what I knew how to do, a rationale which Becker (2007) sees as at least partially valid. Moreover, as Silverman (2010) suggests, it seemed pragmatic to align myself with other published work in my area which is generally qualitative in nature. However, I accepted Patton’s (2002) warnings that methodological prejudices may lead to rigid and inappropriate methodological choices. I was conscious that the real methodological driver should be the core purpose of my study, itself determining the nature of the question posed. I was interested in tapping the depth of my colleagues’ personal feelings. The potential of qualitative research to reveal internal states – worldviews, values, symbolic constructs – in addition to externally observed behaviours (Denzin, 1989) aligned with this purpose.

Acknowledging that there is no simple distinction between qualitative and quantitative research (Silverman, 2010), I intended to collect some quantitative data relating to individual and School publication output to support my contextual understanding of writing practices. This contextual data is given in Chapter 1. However, my real interest lies in *how* professional identities are developed and the relationship between this and academic writing rather than *what* is published and *when*. I wanted to study the phenomenon of individual responses to conceptions of professional identity in

detail, rather than produce data leading to standardised and systematic comparisons. I therefore did not consider this a mixed methods study. This would suggest that the quantitative data have equal status with the qualitative data in this study, which they do not. Rather, I made minimal use of a systematising, disaggregating approach simply to provide a contextual clue in the development of my holistic understanding of colleagues' experience of professional identity and its impact on their academic writing practices. In this I sought the 'essence of the life observed' (Bruyn, 1966, in Patton, 2002:61). Following Brew (2003), I understand the research process as a journey of coming to know, conceptualising knowledge not as separate from the researcher but as integral to their world. Such objectives were best served through a qualitative study, allowing the capturing and honouring of diverse perspectives (Patton, 2002), including my own.

### **The second layer: a paradigmatic grounding**

Given my interest in how individuals make sense of their role as academics within a School of Education, phenomenology appeared to provide an appropriate paradigmatic grounding for my study. The phenomenological view of meaning-making as the quintessence of the human experience (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994) resonated with my study's aims. I was not primarily interested in how professional identity and academic writing is viewed and articulated by the wider university through its structures and procedures. Instead, my focus was on how individuals within the university view this aspect of their world. I wanted to understand and represent experience from the perspective of the individual, exploring the everyday experience of my colleagues and mining its capacity to challenge normative assumptions (Van Manen, 1990) whilst also looking for patterns across individual stories to support my theorising agenda.

I am an insider in this research and an example of the individuals whose worldview I seek to understand. A purist's view of phenomenology as requiring researcher neutrality (Patton, 2002) would suggest that this approach had nothing to offer me.



However, I was encouraged by Lowes and Prowse's (2001) argument that Heidegger's conception of phenomenology allows for the acknowledgement of pre-conceptions, even viewing them as integral to the research. Unlike Husserl, who recommended the bracketing of researcher beliefs (Crotty, 1998), Heidegger saw that the researcher, being in the world themselves, could best understand others in the world by retaining this position. This allowed me to be framed and made visible in the research. I accept the subjectivity of this experience, viewing this as inevitable.

The practice of some phenomenologists of looking for commonalities in order to distil the essence of something (Ladkin, 2005) similarly suits my purpose of theory development. However, the search for an 'essence' suggests determining the quintessence of an experience, synthesised from the perceptions of many, rather than honouring the uniqueness of individual experiences. The use of a narrative inquiry strategy in my research design offered a way to balance this, to honour individual experiences whilst simultaneously looking for connections between them.

### **The third layer: a narrative inquiry strategy**

Narrative is not a stable concept with a universally accepted meaning. Instead, Rudrum (2005) suggests that its meaning is best defined by its use. In everyday life, narrative is associated with story-telling. I have therefore adopted Reissman's (2008) stance of using the terms narrative and story interchangeably. In a story or narrative, a speaker or writer connects events in a sequence, with the purpose of conveying meaning to a listener or reader. People use stories to make sense of the world, to interpret experience in a way which is meaningful to them (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Such story-making is active (Phelan, 1996, in Rudrum, 2005): we tell stories about our own lives and the lives of those we connect with. Bruner (1996:36) sees this capacity to create 'a record of agentic encounters with the world' as a distinguishing feature of humankind. I am making dual use of story in this work, using it to help me to understand others' worlds and, by extension, my own.

What then could I draw from narrative inquiry over other forms of research strategy for support in achieving my research purpose? I wanted to use narrative to understand the sense which my colleagues, as individuals, make of their professional identity, to 'provide a window into people's beliefs and experiences' (Bell, 2002:209). Narratives can be told on a grand scale; they can narrate the history of countries or societies. In contrast, I adopted a 'small stories' approach, to capture the experience of individuals and acknowledge the fluid and contingent nature of identity (Georgakopoulou, 2006). Drawing on my view of a constructed reality, I conceived of this research as an ongoing process of construction rather than a time-limited search for known truths. The role of narrative inquiry as a conduit through which to raise new questions and new inquiries (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000) thus resonated with me.

Narrative's ability to focus on the individual does not negate its potential contribution to theory-building. Indeed, Bruner (1996) points to the particular power of narrative in supporting the theorising of social life, a position supported by Silverman (1998). This arises in part from its potential to make meaning through the discovery of connections, through seeing something as part of a whole, with one thing being the cause of another (Polkinghorne, 1988). Dewey (1938) underlines this centrality of connectedness in experience: we experience things in relation to one another and to our circumstances which then allows us to make sense of a life lived (McAdams, 1996). My research question focuses on this connectivity of experience. This connectivity is not that of natural sciences, which tend to focus on a search for cause and effect. Narrative connectedness challenges these dominant, scientific knowledge paradigms, built on fixed truths. Instead of a logio-scientific way of knowing, where individuals are valuable only in terms of their exemplifying a general law, story provides a way of representing and honouring different realities (Bruner, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988). The connection between conceptions of professional identity and attitudes and approaches to academic writing can therefore be explored and exemplified in my research without the suggestion of a causal, representative relationship.

An acceptance of varying ways of knowing and of multiple realities means the anticipation of multiple, and competing, stories. Clandinin et al. (2009) highlight the importance of allowing such competing stories, where individual and organisational views of the world may well clash. Bourdieu (1986), in his exploration of the concept of cultural capital, emphasises the importance of considering ‘cultural fields’, that is, the contexts in which individuals act. Foucault (1977) similarly invites us to examine the implications of the wider social framework within which individuals and systems of control operate. My earlier work with colleagues suggested that their stories of professional identity may well compete with promulgated corporate truths. Narrative’s potential to take account of the organisational context in which the stories are produced (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) through the use of a three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000) confirms its value for my research. Interested in the process of narrative inquiry, that is, what narrative inquirers do, Clandinin and Connolly introduce this metaphorical space to problematise the process of collecting and making sense of the stories told. The narratives which are brought into this space, with temporality along one dimension, personal and social along another and space along a third, need also to be interrogated from numerous directions, back and forward through time, inwards and outwards, moving between internal feelings and states and external, environmental conditions. This approach provided a useful stimulus for the development of my own analytical strategy, highlighting the need to consider the stories told from multiple perspectives.

Story appears to provide humans with the opportunity to construct an identity which they can go on to live out (Sikes, 2006; Ricoeur, 1980; Bruner, 1996; Clandinin et al., 2009). This emancipatory power comes from the potential story-making offers a person to create an understanding of the world into which they feel they will fit (Bruner 1996) and have some control over (McAdams, 1996). Narratives are in this way not so much about being as becoming, pointing partially at an analysis of the present but also towards future potential (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000). Such potential accorded well with the developmental aims of my study.

Narratives do not necessarily have to be written. Many different kinds of symbols can tell a story, with visual texts also having narrative potential. Given that the reluctance of my colleagues to write had stimulated me to undertake this study, I wanted to consider offering them an additional mode of sharing their feelings and insights with me. I had experience of using visual methodologies to express feelings around identity when I joined the School of Education. New members of the School are asked to attend induction sessions during their first year in post. A regular feature of each session was the opportunity to produce a picture representing our feelings about ourselves and our work. I subsequently worked with students in this way, using collage to represent diverse understandings such as student/staff relationships within the university and how to develop a conceptual framework. The results of these early forays into using visual representation were very positive. I was surprised by the depth of feeling which making the images surfaced. The verbal protocol of then describing what had been made and why was similarly revelatory. I began this study with a clear view of the importance of writing and publishing to the academic role. Colleagues who inspired the study appeared to have a similarly clear view about what it meant to be an academic writer – you either are one or you are not. I came to understand the need to disrupt such easy assumptions and dichotomies, to consider the subtleties of academic identity. I therefore wanted to use a data collection method which had the potential to reveal and problematise such set ways of thinking, whilst revealing deep-felt emotions. Arts-based research seems to offer this potential.

### **Narratives elicited through arts-based research**

Pure arts-based research can be defined as the actual making of artistic expressions as a primary way of understanding experience (McNiff, 2008, in Knowles & Cole, 2008). Given that visual methodologies formed only part of my research strategy, it would be more accurate to describe this study as drawing on arts-based approaches. The focus of such approaches is on exploration, allowing both participants and researcher to discover ways forward through deepening understandings of our world (Barone &

Eisner, 2012; Leitch, 2006). Such a focus resonated fully with my intentions. I therefore explored the possibilities offered by arts-based research.

Images are often used in research as secondary to text, in an illustrative role (Prosser, 1998). The relatively low status of arts-based research derives in the main from concerns over its validity as a vehicle for knowledge-creation. A view of knowledge based on claims of certainty or externally verifiable truths would indeed find little of value in arts-based research. However, my own understanding of knowledge as socially constructed leads me to be particularly interested in exploring the meanings which my colleagues make of their professional role. Making use of arts-based research in this quest for understanding therefore seemed valid. Frosh's (2002, cited in Leitch, 2006) contention that there are points where words are inadequate to explain what is known, felt or believed resonated with me. Polyani's (1967, cited in Eisner, 2004) suggestion that much of our knowledge is tacit and untold has been borne out in my professional work. It is often difficult to express the most profound knowings in propositional form. Arts-based research seeks to offer participants an alternative way of representing feelings, responses and understandings, with a body of research pointing towards the opportunity images offer us to explore the subtleties of our experience in creative, non-linear ways (Loads, 2009; Spouse, 2000; Leitch, 2006; Black, 2002).

Images serve two purposes in this study. The first is to provide participants with a stimulus for reflecting on and expressing their understanding of the complexity of their professional identity. Creating metaphors for feelings and experiences allows for more imaginative and reflective connection-making than words might allow (James & Brookfield, 2014). The second purpose is to provide the reader with an alternative way of accessing what participants attempted to convey about their professional identity. There is a certain irony in the fact that, in order to allow the researcher and reader access to the images, their maker was asked to explain them in words. This notwithstanding, the images sometimes appear to retain an illuminative value which goes beyond the words chosen to explain them. Where this is the case, the images

themselves have been included in the thesis. This choice is clearly subjective on the part of the researcher and could be seen to lean towards the researcher interpreting the images in a way their maker did not intend. Despite this tension, they are offered as an additional point of access into the participants' stories.

Within the wider sphere of arts-based research I was particularly interested in the use of collage. I wanted to free participants from the challenge of drawing, which often evokes memories of previous success or failure in artistic representation as a school student. An arts-based approach would allow thoughts and feelings to be made manifest in a tangible way which did not rely on perceived artistic ability. Collage offered participants the potential to try things out, to move pieces around and thus to create a new way of expressing either original thoughts or new ways of seeing, stimulated through the making process itself (Gauntlett, 2011). Moreover, Eisner (1993) suggests that art is not simply an alternative way of representing knowledge, rather a way of releasing different forms of understanding. Others strengthen this view, underlining the efficacy of images in uncovering hidden or unconscious aspects of experience (Weber & Mitchell, 1996; Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006). For Gourlay (2009), the use of imagery has the additional benefit of allowing not only the release but the expression of complex experiences in a non-threatening way.

Given the complexity of the experience of being and becoming an academic, an arts-based methodology became increasingly attractive. There is a developing use of imagery in research around identity and teacher development, although this has not yet extended fully to teachers in higher education. I wanted to avoid coming to simplistic conclusions about identity development. Loads' (2009) belief in the ability of artistic means to slow down meaning-making around identities, allowing a focus on aspects of experience which might otherwise be overlooked, was therefore persuasive.

It is not only the meaning of others' identities which is of importance to me but also the making of my own. As a new academic, I too am trying to find my own place in the academy. It is to my own position in the research that I now turn. As a member of

the community I am studying, a new academic, trying to find her own place in the academy, I will be using my research to re-tell my own story, as well as to discover the stories of others. Clandinin et al. (2009) point to the inevitability of the narrative researcher becoming part of the phenomenon studied. I therefore acknowledge my position 'in the midst' (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000:63), with my own developing story positioned as a part of the bigger story I tell. I could pose an argument here for the superiority of insider research, bringing as it does the potential for rich interpretation due to an innate understanding of the re-created research world (Tierney, 1994; Lea & Street, 1998). However, such an argument is futile, given that I have no choice in my positioning. Instead, I acknowledge and welcome my connection to my research participants and authenticate my research through a transparent acknowledgement of both the complexity and richness which this will bring.

Given my natural connection to the research participants and my interest in narrative and arts-based methodologies, adopting a collaborative approach to my empirical research seemed logical. In supporting academics to develop as writers, I see myself working to an emancipatory agenda. However, the sector pressure to produce certain types of writing to fit an external accountability agenda may mean that I am actually restricting colleagues' capacity to develop new knowledge and understanding or to express it in creative ways. With my heightened awareness of the ethic of control, I was concerned to find a research strategy which would allow participants a degree of agency. A collaborative strategy, offering the capacity to foreground participants' voices, whilst telling their own stories in words and images, strengthened my capacity to ensure that the research process itself did not become part of a control system.

Narrative and arts-based research approaches are naturally collaborative, both having the capacity to break down barriers between researcher and researched (Clandinin et al., 2009; Gourlay, 2009). Indeed, Gale and Wyatt (2006) point to the emancipatory nature of the conflation of researcher and researched in such approaches for both

participants. The framework offered by Clandinin and Connolly's (2000) three-dimensional inquiry space seemed particularly useful here, allowing participants and researcher to shape understandings together. There are of course dangers in such co-construction. Whilst applauding the opportunity to move away from master narratives to individual voices (Goodson & Sikes, 2001), a collaborative approach nevertheless raised the issue of 'whose voice is the loudest'. My colleagues' stories are theirs and as such I wanted their voice to come through in the stories' re-telling. However, I did not want my own voice to disappear, to suggest that the research can simply speak for itself (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2003). My own voice is also legitimate. I had a role as both the orchestrator of the story-telling and in its interpretation. I was therefore mindful of the need to find a balance in the collaborative process which allowed me to retain some element of control and guide the research approach in such a way that appropriate data were produced to allow insight into my specific research questions.

In summary then, my methodological approach is rooted in a constructivist view of reality and an open approach to knowledge, strongly influenced by an interpretivist theoretical perspective. Drawing on phenomenology, I was committed to working collaboratively with my research participants and to honouring their individual stories. I therefore adopted a collaborative narrative inquiry research strategy, with narratives being understood as formed from both words and images. I now move on to consider the impact of this methodological positioning on the research methods I chose to use to gather, analyse, interpret and present the data which will illuminate my research questions.

### **Research methods: starting from the centre of the onion**

It is tempting to begin this section by discussing how I went about collecting data from my research participants. However, I am mindful of the need to consider data collection techniques not as stand-alone tools but as part of my overall research



strategy. I therefore begin at the end, at the centre of the research onion, with a discussion of the ways in which I chose to present my data. An understanding of how I came to decisions about this issue illuminates my decisions around the research tools I chose to use to collect these data and the analytical strategies I adopted to help me to make meaning from them.

I have chosen to present my data firstly as seven individual portraits. My use of the term ‘portrait’ requires exploration here. The methodology of portraiture, introduced by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis (1997), has an inductive orientation. Through the co-creation of portraits with their research participants, it offers researchers the opportunity to capture:

...the richness, complexity and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of those who are negotiating these experiences...

(Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997:3)

Portraiture clearly harmonises with the arts-based approaches I sought to adopt to reveal the complex professional lives of my participants, ‘the real lives of real people’ (Cope et al., 2015). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis’ (1997) belief in the empowering nature of portraits, through their offer of a vehicle to voice issues and to engage in meaningful reflexivity, also recommended portraiture to me. It offered me an inductive way of revealing the issues of importance to my participants which could sit comfortably alongside the deductive, thematic analysis of data, guided by my conceptual framework, which would support my theorising agenda.

Whilst drawing on Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis’ (1997) work, my use of portraits differed in several ways from these researchers. Firstly, although committed to sharing the developing portraits with participants in order to allow for commentary and some sense of co-construction, I was not committed to the levels of researcher-participant co-development of portraits which characterise Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis’ (1997) work. Equally, whilst acknowledging my position as a

member of the community I was studying, I did not seek to weave my own voice with those of participants in the production of the individual portraits – the story remained theirs. Perhaps more fundamentally, I support English's (2000) critique of portraiture's tacit intention of capturing the essence of a subject as erroneously referencing a stable truth, a reality which can be captured whereas no such reliable truth exists. The portraits I produced did not seek to capture such truths but to present each participant's story of their experience at a specific point in time.

These variances and misgivings, together with portraiture's clear affinity with case studies, could suggest a series of case studies as a more appropriate vehicle for the presentation of individuals' stories. Stake (1995), for example, underlines case studies' capacity to highlight the individual, showcasing what is unique about the case. This accords with my research purpose of honouring individual experience. Merriam (1988) emphasises this function in her analysis of case studies as intensive, holistic descriptions of a bounded phenomenon such as a person. My intention to develop an interpretive theory by looking across participants' stories was also supported by the potential of a case study approach to determine cause and effect (Cohen et al., 2007). A clear answer to the question 'what is the unit of analysis or case?' is fundamental to theorising from case studies (Yin, 2003; Patton, 2002). The unit of analysis in my study is clearly the individual academic. However, the purpose of my focus on this individual is not to produce a full picture of the individual in a context, as a case study might seek to do. Instead, the picture is selective; it is written for the purpose of engaging the participant in a dialogue about their professional identity and thus promoting understanding of it. Whilst drawing on some elements of case study methodology then, the term 'portraits' more faithfully describes both the intention and the form which I chose for the presentation of my seven participants' individual stories.

Each portrait was designed to honour an individual's experiences and give the participant a voice. The portraits allowed me to share meaning-making through acting as 'messy texts' (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, in Guba & Lincoln, 2011), that is, texts

which deliberately deviate from more conventional narrative accounts to allow for the presentation of the complexity of human experience. The portraits comprise a combination of words and images, taken from participants' collages. In this they represent the result of an attempt to learn about individuals' conceptions of their professional identity through the use of an inductive, intuitive approach to analysing and interpreting the data I gathered, as a balance to more overtly analytical approaches (Anderson, 2006).

Such a purpose does not negate my theorising imperative, however. Drawing on Simons (2009), I sought to secure some degree of generalisability through the presentation of recognisable insights, albeit located in the particularity of individual portraits. My conceptual framework makes some attempt to suggest connections and offers them for empirical exploration. I used this framework to set boundaries for the study, to set limits for my data gathering. However, the portraits act as an alternative frame, a way of helping to shape the thematic analysis guided by my conceptual framework.

Although not seeking to adopt a positivist approach in this study, I am nevertheless, through my thematic analysis of data, focusing on the connections between conceptions of professional identity and attitudes and approaches to academic writing. I used a qualitative approach not only because of its potential for rich description but also its ability to reveal which events led to which consequences (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However, I am aware of the need to be tentative in my claims of connectivity, and am mindful of the aptness of 'fuzzy generalisations' (Bassey, 1999:3) as opposed to more definitive claims more appropriate for positivistic studies.

### **The final layers: data-gathering and analytical approaches**

A combination of data-gathering approaches best supported my research aims. Gourlay's (2009) view of the power of a combination of images and qualitative

interviewing in the investigation of identities seemed to offer a practical way forward for an exploration of academics' conceptions of their research identity. Black (2002) made productive use of a combination of drawing and writing in her work on teacher self-awareness, a combined approach successfully developed in Leitch's (2006) work investigating teacher identity. Here, images were used to release unconscious as well as conscious experience. Harper (2003) agrees that the combination of text and image can produce data of exceptional intimacy.

This potential for intimacy and for tapping into the unconscious began to worry me however. I did not wish to put colleagues in situations which would need to be addressed by therapeutic remedies outside of my realm of experience. Indeed, this would raise some difficult ethical questions regarding my ability to adequately explain to potential participants the possible personal impact of the research process. I found Williams' (2000) approach helpful. She suggests that the researcher clarify explicitly to participants the use of arts-based work as a medium to describe a situation rather than remedy it. Leitch's (2006) suggested procedures of offering the possibility for a debrief, of progress checking and offering the possibility for withdrawal at any time, are similarly helpful as part of a more general ethic of care in the complex relationship between myself and the participants.

### **Informal interviews**

I had a dual imperative in gathering my research data: to support the agency of my participants in constructing their own authentic narrative and to ensure that I collected data which effectively illuminated my research questions. I intended to ask a number of colleagues to develop a narrative in written and visual form reflecting on their experience of becoming an academic in the School of Education. I was aware that, in order to understand their story, I needed to ask them to explore these narratives with me. The need for a flexible, unstructured approach to eliciting this commentary was key. Rather than a one-way information channel, effectively controlled by the

interviewer, this would be more of an opportunity for both myself and my research participants to cement our collaborative relationship, to connect our stories and learn together about being an academic (Ellis & Berger, 2003). The informal conversational interview (Patton, 2002), otherwise termed the unstructured interview (Fontana & Frey, 2003), appeared appropriate for the development of a collaborative, non-hierarchical research process.

I was encouraged by Clandinin and Connolly's (2000) view of the applicability of informal interviews to insider-researcher situations. Such interviews have more in common with conversations than interrogations (Kvale, 1996), challenging the normal hierarchical relationship which interviews generally imply. This interviewing technique has been shown to be effective with teachers as research participants (Woods, 1985). Here, I could allow questions to flow from the context, as in a natural conversation, pursuing lines of inquiry which appear important for individual participants. Of course, as Czarniawska warns (2004), there is a danger that the control of the interview slips to the participant. They are the ones who know their story. However, I felt that the use of an interview guide, detailing predetermined areas of focus, together with sensitising concepts (Patton, 2002) would enable me to retain adequate control to support the interview's purpose as a data-gathering tool.

Despite its obvious strengths in terms of alignment with the aims and spirit of my research, such a flexible approach clearly had its weaknesses. I was concerned that it would be very difficult to avoid leading questions and researcher biases. My acceptance that all research is open to such biases meant that this approach remained attractive to me, however. The analytical complexity of this interview approach, considered below, could equally have made such an approach unacceptable. However, the flexibility and potential for deep understanding it offered meant that the strengths outweighed the weaknesses for my research purposes. On balance, I concluded this to be an appropriate way forward.

## **Making meaning from the data**

I am aware that the stance I bring to the research impacts on it at all levels. I made explicit choices in the approach I took to gathering my data through the tools I used, the questions I asked, the comments I probed and those I did not. My choice of analytical approach equally reflects my assumptions and my position and affects what I discover. This understanding is based on my view of the contested nature of truth. The data I worked with are not neutral but already imbued with interpretation through the process of their construction by participants and my gathering of them (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000). The data I collected through this study are, then, partial. They offered me only a limited insight into what I wish to know. I acknowledged the need to take steps to ensure that my own subjectivities did not develop into clear biases which negatively influenced my analytical and evaluative processes (Simons, 2009). Taking a reflexive approach to all levels of my data analysis and interpretation was imperative (Patton, 2002). This notwithstanding, rather than regretting my obvious partiality, I instead follow Silverman (2010) in celebrating what I have come to know and in providing a clear justification of how I came to know it in order to validate its worth.

## **A justification of the analytical approach**

A strict application of my social constructivist views would lead me to propose the futility of attempting a justification of any analytical approach, given my belief in the ephemerality of both the data and the interpretive process. However this is, of course, itself a restricted argument. On the one hand, the design of my study supports Coles' (1989) view that the main point of interest is the unfolding of a life lived, rather than its support for theory construction. However, I did wish to theorise what I discovered, to support myself and others in making sense of the experiences I helped to reveal. I wish to understand how academics' conceptions of their professional identity inform attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992

university. I wish to add to the existing body of knowledge on how institutions can build research capacity in the discipline of Education. My justification of the analytical approach rests on its capability to support me in achieving these research aims.

Researchers' ability to develop theory based on qualitative studies is sometimes questioned. Such questioning arises from two sources: the first, a misunderstanding of the type of theory which qualitative researchers seek to develop; the second, poor articulation by researchers of the analytical and interpretive approach adopted to underpin robust, data-driven conclusions. The prevailing definition of theory arises from the positivist tradition. Here, theory is seen as a statement of relationships between variables, with the objective of systemising knowledge. An alternative definition of theory emphasises understanding rather than predictive qualities. Interpretivist theories allow for indeterminacy rather than seeking causality and assume emergent, multiple realities (Charmaz, 2006). The objective of such theory is to conceptualise the study's phenomenon, allowing an articulation of the researcher's understanding in abstract terms. Such a view of theorising acknowledges the role of subjectivity, both in data collection and interpretation. It allows imaginative interpretation and acknowledges theory as created rather than discovered through the research process (Charmaz, 2006). It is this interpretive, inductive, theory which I sought to develop.

Grounded theory initially appeared to offer an appropriate approach to data collection, analysis and interpretation. Glaser and Strauss' (1967) emphasis on an inductive approach to theory-making, with theory arising from the data rather than being imposed on it through pre-determined categories, underpinned my original thinking. I subscribe to their view of the importance of time and context in developing theories of experience. However, the positivist tendencies of their original text in terms of the prescriptions for processes to ensure objectivity do not fully align with my constructivist beliefs or my research aims. More importantly, my immersion in my subject means that I cannot authentically claim to be adopting a true grounded theory

approach. Despite this, Charmaz's (2006) later conceptualisation of a grounded theory approach remains influential in my study. She suggests an intuitive approach to data analysis and interpretation, focusing on the development of a holistic understanding. Such an approach allows for the development of theory through deep immersion in the data, allowing the making of connections and the generation of concepts through feeling as well as coding (Thomas & James, 2006). Inductive and deductive approaches combine to allow both an intuitive response to arising themes and the overt construction, rather than discovery, of an explanatory theory.

In order to avoid the second criticism levelled at qualitative researchers, that of unclear analytical practices, I need to clarify the analytical strategy I used within this general analytical approach. I used a thematic approach to analyse my data. My conceptual framework formed the basis of a thematic analytical framework. The data were initially sifted and sorted into the themes pre-determined there. These themes were then grouped through an iterative process of review and revision and new, emergent themes were added.

### **A statement of ethical principles**

In *The Call of Stories*, Robert Coles recalls an early comment by his supervisor as Coles struggled to learn to be a practicing psychiatrist.

The people who come to see us bring us their stories. They hope they tell them well enough so that we understand the truth of their lives. They hope that we know how to interpret their stories correctly. We have to remember that what we hear is *their story*.

(Coles, 1989:7; original emphasis)

I found the responsibility for collecting, analysing and interpreting my research participants' perceptions of reality daunting and ethically challenging. The ethical decisions taken in this research were underpinned by BERA's (2011) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. The guidelines aim to support educational



researchers in weighing up all aspects of the process of conducting research in order to assure choices of action which are justifiable and ethically sound. I took the guidelines' focus on respect in all aspects of research as my guiding principle. However, I agree with de Laine's (2000) view that the researcher's intentions, motivations and ways of being in the research are better indicators of an ethically sound study than superficial adherence to a given ethical code. Adopting a virtue approach to ethical dilemmas (Macfarlane, 2010), that is, attempting to act in accordance with my conscience, supported my attempt to research by my ethical principles, rather than simply to declare them.

I wanted my research to be authentic, to have an approach to data collection, analysis and interpretation which is fair, respects participants' perspectives and empowers them to act (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An understanding of these intentions and motivations draws on a reflexive approach to the research process. I have used this reflexive approach to consider the ethical dilemmas presented by each aspect of the research. This consideration is woven through this thesis rather than appearing as a discrete, and hence limited, section.

### **Assuring validity and reliability**

I am seeking to develop a theory about how colleagues' perceptions of their professional identity shape their writing capacity and practice. Through this I wish to add to the existing body of knowledge about how institutions can build research capacity in the discipline of Education. I therefore need to establish a warrant for my work though ensuring that my conclusions are based on a sound research approach (Simons, 2009). This research approach is presented in detail in Chapter 7, in order to allow the reader the opportunity to fully understand the rigour of the research process. The discussion of the meticulous approach to data analysis is particularly important in establishing the data's reliability and validity and hence the basis on which I make my claims.

I did not wish to distort the nature of my research by applying to it tests of validity and reliability which fit more comfortably with positivistic research. Qualitative work can be more effectively judged by the degree to which it is credible, reflexive, offers a substantial contribution to our insight and causes readers to engage at an emotional and intellectual level with the research in order to enhance their understanding of social life (Richardson, 2003). I have established the basis for the credibility of my research approach in Chapter 7. The emotional engagement of the work is yet to be fully publically tested. However, I wished to clearly establish research participants' recognition of the experience revealed in the thesis (Simons, 2009). I therefore wove opportunities for participant commentary on my presentation of their stories into the research approach.

Kvale (1995) argues for the pragmatic validity of research, proposing such validity as potentially secured through the discursive processes and the application of the research itself. I suggest that the pragmatic validity of this research inevitably arises through the enhanced discourse around writing and publication in the School of Education and the positive developmental experience offered through participation in the research process. Such impact is clearly evidenced through Tamsin's response to her draft portrait (see page 174). It is validity tests of this nature which I have applied to this study.

## **Summary**

I wish to theorise how particular academics, those working in a School of Education in a post-1992 university, conceive their professional identity and to explore how this conception mediates their attitudes and approaches to engaging in academic writing. This chapter establishes my research methodology and methods. I suggest that a qualitative approach which draws on both inductive and deductive methods best served my purposes. A phenomenological grounding allowed me to adopt a collaborative research strategy which drew on narrative inquiry to support the

construction of individual portraits. A combination of inductive and deductive approaches was then used to support a thematic analysis. In Chapter 7 I move on to give an account of the research process, detailing the research tools used and the strategies for translating into action the data gathering, analytic and interpretive approaches described in this chapter.

## **Chapter 7**

### **An analytical account of the research process**

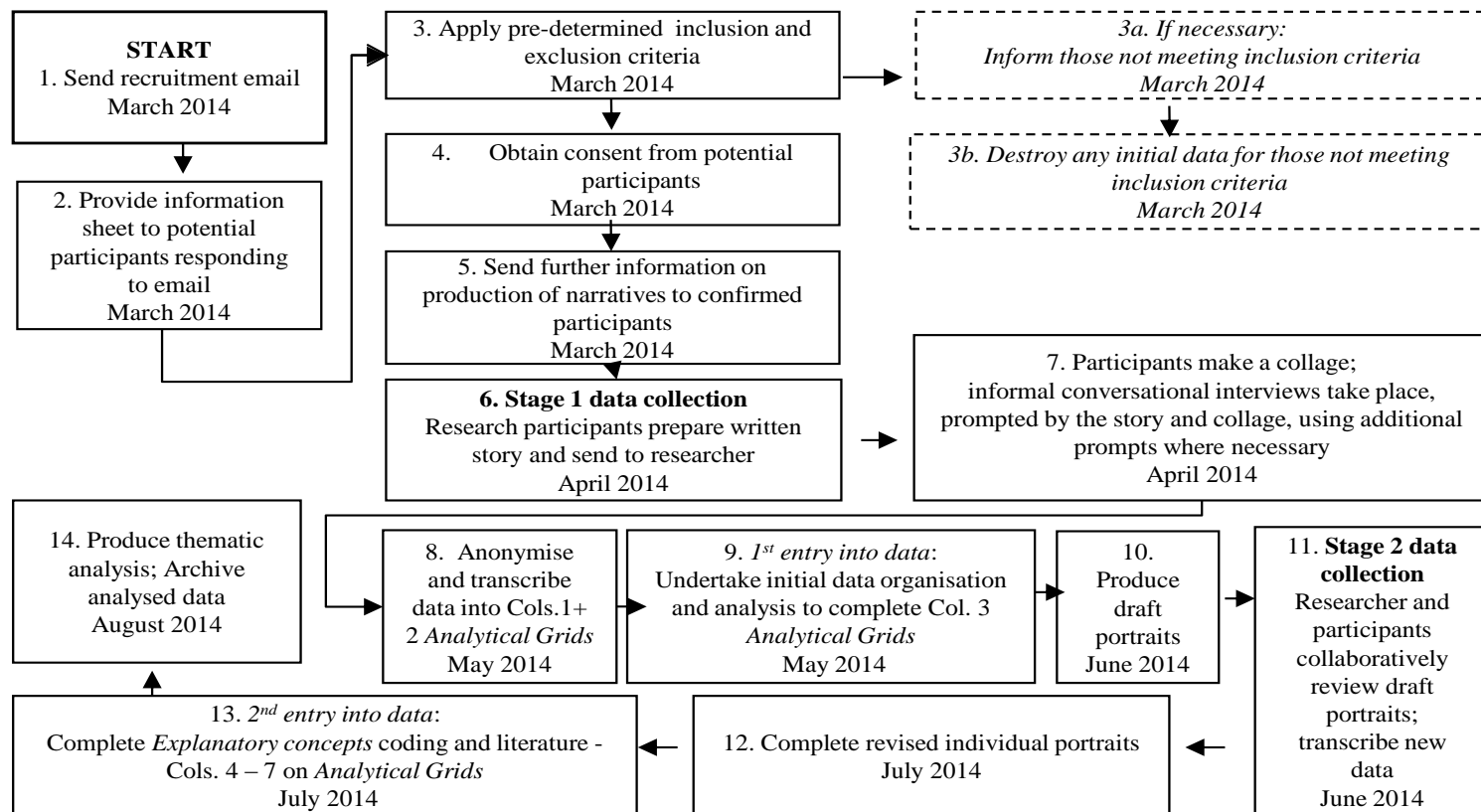
The main aim of my research was to explore the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitude and approaches to academic writing. In Chapter 6, I established the particular research approach which I argue best supported me in realising this purpose. In this chapter, I give an account of the research process, in order to establish its rigour and to give a sense of the weight of the data collected. I begin by detailing how my research participants were recruited and selected. I then discuss the tools I designed and used to facilitate the gathering of empirical data and the data gathering process as a whole. I end the chapter by presenting and explaining my analytical framework and my approach to interpretation.

#### **Actioning the research approach: what was done how, when and for what purpose**

In Chapter 1 I set out the research questions used to underpin this study. The activities undertaken by both myself and my participants to illuminate these research questions are summarised in Figure 7.1 below. Figure 7.2 below is a chart which shows the discrete steps I took in the research process. One purpose of this chart was to support the practicalities of the research process. Another was to provide an organising framework for a set of practices which would support the credibility of my data. I thus sought to ensure reader confidence in my data and their interpretation and thus in my recommendations for action based upon them.

| Research questions   | Participant activity  | Tools   | Researcher activity  | Tools  | Data generated  |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| <p>What is the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing?</p> <p>What meaning do academics in a School of Education in a post-1992 university make of the social world of their university and School of Education?</p> <p>How do these academics understand their professional identity?</p> <p>What meaning do these academics make of the practices of research and academic writing?</p> <p>What influences this meaning-making?</p> | <p>Preparation of written and visual narratives;</p> <p>engagement in informal conversational interview;</p> <p>engagement in review of portrait prepared by the researcher</p> | <p>collage materials;</p> <p>guidance sheet on the nature and purpose of the narratives;</p> <p>draft portraits</p> | <p>facilitation of informal conversational interview;</p> <p>transcription of interview;</p> <p>analysis of data;</p> <p>writing of draft portraits;</p> <p>facilitation of review of portraits;</p> <p>writing of final portraits;</p> <p>writing of thematic analysis and interpretation</p> | <p>informal conversational interview prompts;</p> <p>conceptual framework with analytical codes;</p> <p>draft portrait proforma;</p> <p>analytical grid proforma</p> | <p>written and visual narratives;</p> <p>interview transcripts;</p> |

**Figure 7.1** How my research questions were addressed by participant and researcher activity



**Figure 7.2** Research steps summary chart

In this chart, the enactment of my research approach is represented in a series of 14 steps. Steps 1-5 describe the preparation for the collection of the data. Steps 6-10 describe the first stage of data collection and analysis. Steps 11-14 describe the section stage of data collection and analysis. The research process is presented in these discrete steps for the sake of clarity. In fact, the approach needs to be read as an organic whole, with an acknowledgement of each aspect as both determined by and determining all others. Despite this limitation, this summary chart proved a useful tool for ensuring that each step of the research process was enacted. It also supported my attempt to adhere to set timescales.

### **An intended pilot study**

I planned to pilot steps 2–12 with a colleague, to enable me to make any appropriate changes to the research approach and tools prior to my main data gathering process. This pilot was completed, in that the colleague and I went through the full research process, from steps 2–12, and reviewed them together. However, counter to the norm in positivistic studies, in this study the data from the pilot was included in the main data set. My rationale for this was that the pilot demonstrated the effectiveness of the data gathering approach, rather than finding it wanting. Only one change was made. The pilot participant requested that, rather than make her collage and then describe it to me, she be allowed to share her thoughts with me during the process of collage construction. I was happy for her to do so.

In discussion after the collage had been made, my colleague explained her rationale for this request. She felt that she would be able to share the detail of her thinking more clearly with me if she articulated the thoughts as they entered her mind, supported by the physical movements needed to place objects in the collage.

The richness of the data gained from this participant interested me. In her rationale for this, she exemplified Boren and Ramsey's (2000) conclusions that the use of the 'think

aloud' technique, that is, asking a person to verbalise their thinking whilst performing a task, allows access to a person's thinking in a way which post-task verbalisation does not. I therefore offered this mode of articulation to all participants, although they could also choose to discuss the collage on its conclusion. All took up the think-aloud option, with most commenting on its efficacy in allowing them to share their thoughts. One participant, however, exemplified Stratman and Hamp-Lyons' (1994, in Branch, 2001) critique of such verbal protocols, finding it difficult to construct the collage and talk at the same time.

### **An account of the research process**

The steps in the summary chart at Figure 7.2 are used in this chapter as an organising framework for an account of my research process. However, following the lead given by Clark et al. (2007:112), I continue to acknowledge the 'messy business that is quality research' and use my points of departure from the precise pathway detailed in this stepped approach to generate critical commentary. Associated research tools are explained and included where appropriate in a series of appendices.

#### ***Step 1: Send recruitment email***

In a study focusing on the construction of academics' identities and writing practices, it is axiomatic that the unit of analysis would be individual academics. It is the essence of individuals' experience which I wish to be able to say something about at the end of this thesis. However, I also have a theorising purpose. I was not interested in securing a representative sample which would allow for generalisation in the positivistic sense. I therefore intended to look across the stories of individuals in order to determine more general findings. My sampling approach therefore needed to be appropriate for these dual purposes.

In common with much qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002), my purposes were best served by focusing on a relatively small sample. I intended to use my sample to



illuminate my research questions and, through a thematic analysis, offer a tentative theory. A purposive sampling approach seemed appropriate to allow me to fulfil these aims. This approach allowed me strategically to select participants who I believed would provide information-rich cases. Patton (2002) reports there are several ways of determining such information-rich cases, with the choice of strategy determined by researcher purpose. I drew on a combination of these strategies to fulfil my dual purpose, using elements from four sampling approaches to draw up inclusion and exclusion criteria for my sample. This general sampling strategy, with consequent inclusion and exclusion criteria, is detailed in Figure 7.3 below.

The practice of recruiting my research participants was actually far less structured than this neat chart suggests however. The first step in my research activity was intended to be to send a recruitment email to all academics in the School of Education, in order to secure participants for my research study. However, I work in an office of seven people. I was asked by a colleague in this office about my planned data gathering methods for my study. When I explained the collage element of the approach, leading to the production of individual portraits, she and another colleague who had entered the room immediately asked to be part of the study. Furthermore, one of these colleagues then suggested another colleague who she believed would be interested.

My position on the ethical grounding of this study, discussed in Chapter 6, helped me to resolve this dilemma. I determined to take the focus on respect in BERA's (2011) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research as my guiding ethical principle. Following de Laine (2000), I was committed to endeavouring to ensure that my intentions, motivations and ways of being in the research would be my evidence for an ethically sound study, rather than a superficial adherence to pre-determined rules. Having discussed the issue with a senior colleague within my School of Education, I decided that I would not invite all potential participants to be part of my study.

| <b>Sampling strategies, within a general purposive sampling approach</b> | <b>Purpose</b>  | <b>Consequent inclusion criteria for my research: colleagues may be included if they:</b>  | <b>Consequent exclusion criteria for my research: colleagues will not be included if they:</b>  |
|--|---|--|---|
| Homogenous sampling  | To allow a focus on broadly similar participants, all of whom fit the research criteria, to allow for a replication logic which supports theory development | Are academics in my School of Education;<br>Are interested in exploring their professional identity through an exploratory research process;<br>Have an interest in exploring academic writing through an exploratory research process;  | Have a role which focuses primarily on research;<br>Are not interested in an exploratory research process   |
| Intensity sampling   | To allow the investigation of information-rich cases which 'manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extremely' (Patton, 2002:243)                         | Have displayed an interest in exploring academic identity;<br>Have displayed an interest in exploring academic writing;<br>The extent of their writing experience/ route into academia/time in the academy renders the individual a potentially information-rich case  | Are not interested in explorations of identity or academic writing;<br>The extent of their writing experience/ route into academia/time in the academy does not render the individual a potentially information-rich case |
| Convenience sampling   | To support maximum researcher convenience in terms of time, money and effort  | Have time to allocate to:<br>preparing a written narrative;<br>making a visual narrative – collage;<br>Discussing their narratives in an informal conversational interview;<br>Reviewing and commenting on their draft portrait as developed by the researcher to inform the development of a final portrait | Have no time to allocate to:<br>Preparing the narratives;<br>Discussing their narratives in an informal conversational interview;<br>Reviewing and commenting on their draft portrait                                     |
| Opportunistic sampling   | To allow the researcher to follow new leads as the research unfolds   | Appear to be able to offer new understandings  | Do not appear to have the potential to contribute to new understandings   |

**Figure 7.3** My general sampling strategy, with inclusion and exclusion criteria

My involvement in the School of Education writing support programme, discussed in Chapter 1, meant that I had some knowledge of the position of 80 per cent of colleagues in the School with regard to attitudes and approaches to academic writing. The two colleagues who had volunteered fitted the homogenous and intensity sampling criteria detailed in Figure 7.3 in terms of their position as academics in the School of Education who were interested in exploring academic writing. I was less sure of their interest in exploring professional identity, although they had responded positively when I explained the study to them and were clearly willing to spend the time in developing and sharing their narratives.

I sent the initial recruitment email, shown in Appendix 1, to these two potential participants. As the colleague they had suggested also fitted the intensity sampling criteria, I also sent the initial recruitment email to her. All three participants replied, confirming their wish to know more about the study.

I analysed the position of these three participants in terms of their writing experience, their route into the academy and their length of time in post. In accordance with my intensity sampling criteria, I then emailed three other colleagues who I believed would offer different experiences. These colleagues also confirmed their wish to know more about the study.

### ***Step 2: Provide information sheet to potential participants responding to email***

The six participants who confirmed their interest in the study were sent the 'Information sheet for participants', shown in Appendix 2. This sheet gave information on the purpose of the study and what would be required of participants if they decided to take part. All six participants confirmed that they still wished to take part in the study. The inclusion of my colleague who had agreed to be the participant in the pilot study brought this sample to seven.

Many of the participants mentioned the development opportunity the study offered in their email confirming their intention to take part. Although encouraging, this positive

response was also ethically challenging as, by focusing only on a small, selected sample I had effectively denied others a development opportunity. Given the constraints of time and energy, solutions to this issue were limited. The time needed to work in close collaboration with participants, together with the time needed for the reflexive aspect of the process during this collaboration (Bell, 2002), meant that it would not be practical to work with a large number of participants. In the research design, I was prepared to sacrifice scope for detail, as is common in qualitative research endeavours (Silverman, 2010). The moral issues raised would be addressed to some degree by changes to staff development practice across the School of Education, on the basis of the results of this study.

***Step 3: Apply pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criteria***

I had planned that at this stage of the process I would use my pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criteria to make informed choices amongst the participants applying to my recruitment email. As indicated above, the recruitment process developed in an unexpected way. My inclusion and exclusion criteria were therefore brought to bear at a much earlier point than expected, at Step 1 above.

***Step 4: Obtain consent from potential participants***

Consent was obtained from participants by emailing the ‘Consent form for participants’, shown in Appendix 3, to potential participants. This form explained in detail the nature and demands of the research, to allow participants to take an informed decision over their participation. All potential participants returned a signed hard copy of the completed consent form to me.

***Step 5: Send further guidance on the production of narratives to confirmed participants***

Participants were aware from the initial information regarding the research process that they would need to share their thinking around their professional identity through the production of two narratives, one a written story and the other a collage. The additional guidance, shown in Appendix 4, was designed to give participants time to

think about their professional identity and how they would want to represent it in these two ways.

The further guidance also gave participants details on what was meant by a collage. It was described to them as the activity of putting together a number of materials, for example, paper, ribbon, pebbles etc. to make a representation of how they saw their professional identity. Recognising the possible emotional significance of objects (Dissanayake, 2003), this forewarning gave participants the opportunity to select and bring to our research time together any particular objects which they would wish to use in their collage. Two participants took up this option, bringing with them a number of objects and pictures which they felt were personally meaningful metaphors to use in a representation of their professional identity.

### **Stage 1 data collection**

Stage 1 of the data collection process involved each participant in producing a written story and a collage. These were then discussed in an informal conversational interview. This stage also encompasses the initial organisation of the data and the production of draft portraits.

### ***Step 6: Research participants prepare a written story and send to the researcher***

Participants were requested to prepare a written story in which they reflected on the development of their professional identity. They were asked to send their written story to me in advance of our agreed research time together. This was to allow me to become familiar with it through a process of reading and annotating, so that I could follow up any particular areas of interest during the interview. Four out of the seven participants were able to do this. One participant gave the story to me at the interview. Two participants did not have time to prepare a story in writing. The interview time for these participants was therefore extended to allow them to narrate more of their story verbally. In this case, the story did not exist as a separate entity to the discussion of the collage but arose out of it. This lack of replication of data sources across participants is a potential limitation to the study. Allowing time for those who had not

written their story to verbalise it instead was a pragmatic solution to a research problem. However, data generated in this way may well have been different to that which would or could have been written. Participants who had written a story had the benefit of time to reflect, to craft the story they wished to tell from the myriad of stories which could be told. Those who were telling a story whilst with me had no such time for censor or imaginative process. Despite these shortcomings, the data gained verbally from the participants was rich and illuminating.

***Step 7: Participants make a collage; informal conversational interviews take place***

Each participant met with me at a pre-arranged time to make their collage, in a meeting room within the university but outside of the School of Education, booked specifically for the purpose. As discussed above, participants were asked to ‘think aloud’ about their collage as they made it.

Participants appeared to find the collage-making a powerful stimulus for articulating their thoughts on the subject of professional identity. The placing of objects was done with care and in a very reflective manner. Their significance as metaphors was usually explored fully by participants in their commentary running alongside the collage-making. In this, they mirrored the results of other studies in which participants use metaphor in a more spontaneous way in the process of collage-making than would have been expected in other forms of researcher-participant interaction, such as interviews (Kay, 2013).

The process of collage-making was both video-recorded and audio-recorded. Previous experience with the use of collage had demonstrated that the process of data organisation is considerably eased if the researcher is able to see the parts of the collage which the participant is referring to in their commentary. Still photos were taken of the finished collage. The subsequent conversational interview was audio-recorded.

Once the collage was complete, we moved on to discuss the written narrative and its connection with the collage. This led into a more wide-ranging discussion around professional identity and academic writing which varied according to the lines of interest which had been raised. I had prepared interview prompts for this stage of the data gathering process, shown in Appendix 5, but these were not actually used as it seemed more appropriate and fruitful to follow particular lines of discussion which participants raised.

At the end of our time together, the participant left the room and I anonymised the data I had collected. Each of the seven participants was given a number between 1 and 7. Written stories were coded 'S', collages were coded 'C' and interviews were coded 'I'. Thus any data relating to participant 1's story were coded 1S, to their collage 1C and to their interview 1I. These codes were used throughout the data organisation, analysis and interpretation process in order to ensure participant anonymity.

#### ***Step 8: Anonymise and transcribe data into Columns 1 – 2 of analytical grids***

At the end of the first stage of data gathering I had collected a data set for five participants which comprised a written narrative, a video and audio recording of the process of making a collage, a still photo of the finished collage and an audio-recording of a subsequent interview. For the other two participants I had the same set of data, with the exception of the written narrative. A number of options were open to me in terms of beginning to analyse this data. I had previously investigated the use of NVivo by signing up for the free trial. It appeared to be a useful piece of software for dealing with large, complex data sets and supporting the finding of connections. However, the use of such functions as word searching in order to develop themes seemed unhelpful. Drawing from both portraiture and case study methodology, the retention of the data as whole set seemed justifiable in order to capture the rich experience of individuals.

Although my seven participants had generated substantial data sets, I felt that the transcription process would allow me to get to know the data well. I considered that a

process of manual coding would allow me to begin to analyse my data as I coded it and would result in a deeper understanding of my data, thus allowing me to ask more pertinent questions of it.

Strauss's (1987) view of coding as an adventure appealed to me. The type of open coding he describes, where codes generally emerge from the data, does not fully describe the process I undertook as I had already established general, theoretically-defined categories. However, I drew upon his approach to develop my own scheme which allowed for tentative ideas to emerge from the data and be added to this theoretically-determined coding scheme. This hybrid approach seemed likely to produce the dual understandings I sought in this study, that is, a holistic picture of individual experience together with an understanding which had theorising potential.

Having made this decision, I developed an analytical grid which I used to support the organisation of my data and the process of analysis. I initially designed this grid as a Microsoft (MS) Excel spreadsheet but found the way in which the text appeared difficult to read. I also wanted to be able to log the visual representations of the collage alongside the verbalisation of thinking which had accompanied the placing of particular objects. I therefore used a table in MS Word as the basis for the final analytical grid format, as exemplified in Appendix 7.

A separate analytical grid was set up for each participant. The text of the story, commentary on the collage and interview was transcribed into the second column of this grid. The text was divided into short segments. An image of the particular collage-making-activity being described in each segment of text was placed in the first column of the grid in order to support my intention of using the collages as a data source which supported, rather than simply illustrated, analysis. This transcription process was not simply an act of moving data from one medium to another. Instead, it gave me the opportunity to gain a general sense of the data, to reflect on its overall meaning and, guided by Cresswell (2009), to ask myself questions of the data such as what general ideas are my participants putting forward? What is the tone of what they



are making and saying? What is the weight of the data I am obtaining? I noted any thoughts which arose at this transcription stage in the third column of my analytical grid. This general sense of my data was useful in allowing me to maintain an overall sense of the participants' stories when moving on to undertake the necessary division of the whole for coding purposes.

***Step 9: 1<sup>st</sup> entry into the data: undertake initial data organisation and analysis to complete column 3 of analytical grids***

Once I had transcribed the data into the analytical grids it was tempting to move straight to looking for evidence of the explanatory concepts I had proposed in my initial conceptual framework, detailed in Chapter 5. However, I was struck by Brew's (2001a) views of the dangers of moving too quickly away from the data in order to fit it to a highly structured analytical framework. I wanted to approach the process of analysis in a logical and systematic way. However, I did not want to be lulled into thinking that this could only be achieved through a systematic approach which may not take adequate account of people's feelings or values or other complexities in the data. Agreeing with Schostak and Schostak's (2013) views of the partiality of such an approach, I therefore took a more broad brush approach to my first entry into the data, hoping that this would enable me to respond to the nuances of words and pictures. I used a simple colour-coding mechanism to give a general code to each segment of data, according to their fit with the four possible areas of influence on academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing which I had tentatively proposed in my organising framework, shown in Appendix 6. Segments which did not fit with any of these influences were left white to indicate possible new areas of influence.

I used the third column of the analytical grid to note thoughts on the data which occurred to me during the colour-coding process. An example of this stage of the analytical process is given in Appendix 7.

### ***Step 10: Produce draft portraits***

This first entry into my data was used to underpin the production of the seven individual draft portraits, exemplified in Appendix 8. Each participant was given a pseudonym which began with the first letter of the number allocated to the data set which related to them, as described under step 7 above. Thus participant number one became ‘Olwen’, number two became ‘Tamara’ and so on. The process of coding undertaken at Step 9 was then used to produce a structure for the portraits. This structure varied from one portrait to another as, as exemplified by Clandinin and Connolly (2000). I attempted to remain true to the data whilst re-presenting participants’ stories. However, this re-presentation itself raised both authenticity and ethical issues. The story I told through the production of a portrait is not the participant’s story. Instead, it is my construction of that story, my interpretation of what he or she was attempting to say through the imagery and words used. I took the decision to focus on data, both visual and verbal, which I imagined would help me to illuminate my particular research questions. Adorno (2005, in McArthur, 2011) cautions that no one writer can or should offer the whole story on any issue. There are other stories to tell from my data, but here is not the place to tell them. However, this drive to tell a compelling story, a story which illuminates my research questions, had to be mediated by the detail of the participants’ stories as they were told. This is not *my* story to tell. Instead, I hold the privileged role of being the story-teller for teachers to ensure that, as Michael Apple (2006) has persuasively argued, in the time pressured world they inhabit, *their* story is told. It is this difficult balance which I seek to both acknowledge here and do justice to in the portraits themselves.

### **Stage 2 data collection**

Stage 2 of the data collection process involved the participants reviewing their draft portrait. Coding of the data by explanatory concept, derived initially from the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 5, enabled a thematic analysis.

***Step 11: Researcher and participants collaboratively review draft portraits***

My original intention at this stage of the data analysis was to meet with participants to discuss their response to the draft portraits I had prepared. This second meeting was to be audio-recorded and additional data gained, added to the data set. I had planned this step as taking place in June, as this is a stage of the year when colleagues' teaching commitments ease and they have more time for developmental activities. Unfortunately, the process of data analysis took longer than I anticipated and the draft portraits were not completed until the end of July, when many of my participants were away from the university on their summer break. I therefore decided to ask for comments by email. This method was effective in producing responses, although it did not allow for the fully collaborative production of the final portraits which I had envisaged, nor for the richness of response which a dialogue would have produced. However, as a pragmatic response to a change in circumstances, it was successful.

Participants were asked to annotate the text of their draft portrait in the right hand column, as shown in Appendix 8. They were also asked to make any general comments about the portrait. Responses to these requests were added to the data set. All participants authenticated their portrait in terms of its recognisability and veracity in representing their story, collage and dialogue with the researcher.


***Step 12: Complete revised individual portraits***

My intention here was to amend the draft portraits, taking into account additional data gathered at Step 11 above. The final portrait was then to be sent to participants for authentication. In practice, only one participant requested any change to be made to the text of the draft portrait. This small change was made and agreed with her. The other participants were happy that the text of the draft portrait stood for the final portrait.

**Step 13: 2<sup>nd</sup> entry into the data: Complete ‘explanatory concepts’ coding and literature references in Columns 4-7 of analytical grids**

The portraits had provided one way of analysing the data and had allowed me to fulfil one of my intentions, the honouring of individual experiences of being an academic in my School of Education. I also intended to develop an interpretive theory through undertaking a thematic analysis of the data. To fulfil this intention, I made a second entry into the original data.

I returned to my analytical grids and my original conceptual framework for this stage of the analysis. Adopting a more deductive approach, each explanatory concept arising from my conceptual framework was given a bracketed letter code – for example (IF) = Identity fluidity. I then systematically allocated explanatory concept codes to each segment of the data in my analytical grids. The portraits had raised some new concepts which did not feature in my original conceptual framework. Where segments illustrated such new concepts or raised others, this was noted in red and added to my conceptual framework. My conceptual framework, annotated with these codes, is shown in Appendix 9. Figure 7.4 below shows an example of this coding process.

| 1 Screen shot   | 2 Text: whole transcript  | 3 AR commentary on transcription  | 4 Explan. concept code    | 5 Lit. ref.   | 6 Point made   | 7 AR commentary on relevance of literature  | 8 Data ref.     |
|---|---|---|---------------------------|---------------|--|---|-----------------|
| Ref. SS1.1<br> | An interesting bit – I have already moved on because I would start with how people see me now but actually what I want to start with is how I see my role.                              | Identity as fluid   | (IF)<br><b>1</b>          |               |  |   | 1C1<br><b>2</b> |
|   | I'm going to put this down because I picked this up a few minutes ago and it really made me think about who I am in my role and about the university.                                   | Identity as a real concept to people – who I am has meaning when applied to a professional role | (R)                       |               |  |   | 1C2             |
|   | And each of these are the little members of staff and they are little buds with lots of potential for doing brilliant things in learning and teaching ... but they are closed off buds. | University as shutting off people rather than giving them life                                  | (S/A)<br>(MP)<br><b>3</b> | Peters (2013) | Creative labour rather than estranged labour if anyone can create knowledge – challenges idea of people as human capital for the production of wealth etc. | Important for academics who see themselves as the work horses. Does this give them an opportunity to be creative? | 1C3             |

**Figure 7.4** An example of coding by explanatory concept

Annotated with a red circle and the number 1 in this figure, a segment which illuminates how the participant constructs identity as shifting is coded IF, referencing the concept of identity fluidity. The segment is also given a reference in brackets in the final column of the grid which indicates the source of the comment, identified by participant, data collection activity and location of the comment in the transcript. Thus the reference IC1 at 2 in the figure indicates that this is Participant 1 (1), that the comment comes from their articulation as they made their collage (C) and that this comment can be located at point 1 in the transcript (1), hence IC1.

The concept of moral purpose seemed to have explanatory value for the final segment in this extract. This concept did not feature on my original conceptual framework. Hence a new, red code is allocated to it, shown at 3, to demonstrate that this is an addition to the original framework. My original conceptual framework, annotated with such codes for new explanatory concepts, is shown in Appendix 9.

At this point of the analysis, I returned to the literature I had critiqued in Chapters 2 to 4, in order to see how a consideration of my data in relation to past studies or theoretical frameworks would support me in the process of analysis and interpretation. I added references to the literature and my views on how it related to my data in columns 5-7 of my analytical grid. This process is exemplified in Appendix 10. I found this physical juxtaposing of literature with data useful in supporting my developing thinking.

#### ***Step 14: Produce a thematic analysis***

The final step in this part of the research process was to produce a thematic analysis of my data. This was supported by using the search facility in MS Word to search by the codes which I had allocated to explanatory factors. I began to cut and paste all segments which had the same code into a new MS Word document. However, as Creswell (2009) points out, this is a time-consuming and arduous process. I also found it analytically unhelpful as it divorced the comments from their contexts. I therefore retained the comments within the analytical grids but looked at each segment

which had been coded with the same concept code in turn. This process was used to support the thinking which led to the thematic analysis.

In this chapter I have given an account of the research process, establishing its rigour and giving a sense of the scope of the data collected. The chapter ends with a presentation of my approach to the analysis of my data, including my analytical framework. In Chapter 8 I present the seven individual portraits, followed by a thematic analysis of my data in Chapter 9.

## **Chapter 8**

### **A presentation of seven portraits**

In Chapter 6 I established the rationale for using portraits as both an analytical instrument and a data presentation device. In Chapter 7 I gave an account of the process of data collection and analysis. I established the rigour of my research process and the weight and appropriateness of the data collected. In this chapter, I present the seven individual portraits, developed as described in Chapter 7.

As discussed in Chapter 6, I use the term ‘portrait’ to mean a presentation which is designed to capture the perspective of the individual on a complex and rich experience. These portraits are windows into the beliefs and experiences (Bell, 2002) of seven of my colleagues in relation to their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. As examples of ‘small stories’ (Georgakopoulou, 2006), the purpose of the portraits is to honour and reveal the depth of experience of these individuals.

I am not primarily interested in how professional identity and academic writing are viewed and articulated by the wider university through its structures and procedures. Instead, I am interested in how different academics view this aspect of their world. The presentation of individual portraits gives me the opportunity to represent the everyday experience of the academy from the perspective of the individual, and, in so doing, to unearth the capacity of individuals to challenge normative assumptions (Van Manen, 1990).

The portraits were produced through a largely inductive, intuitive approach to the data (Charmaz, 2006), accepting the limitations imposed by my immersion in the literature discussed in Chapter 7. The purpose was to develop a holistic understanding of individual stories. Such an approach to the understanding and presentation of

experience relies on seeing the data as an authentic proxy for ‘truth’. As such, individuals’ experiences are not critiqued or subjected to scrutiny. They are simply re-presented in a way which is recognisable to the individuals who shared their story.

The portraits presented here originate from a broad brush method of organising the data from the story, collage-making session and subsequent interview with each participant, as befits an inductive approach. As described in Chapter 7, I used a simple colour-coding mechanism to give a general code to each segment of data, according to their fit with the four areas of influence on academics’ conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing tentatively proposed in my organising framework (see Figure 5.1 on page 87).

The portraits are presented below in the order in which I engaged with participants. All participants confirmed their willingness to have their portraits made public in this thesis in this form. In preparing these portraits, I have not endeavoured to present all aspects of the participants’ experience, as revealed through the various data collection processes. Instead, as discussed in Chapter 7, I have self-consciously selected elements of their experience which throw light on the over-arching components of my conceptual framework; that is, conceptions of the university in general and the School of Education in my university in particular, constructions of professional identity and attitudes and approaches to academic writing. This may be construed as telling the story I wish to tell rather than the participants’ story and this criticism would have some validity. However, I did not ignore themes which arose which did not fit with this conceptual framework. Instead, I adhered to my view of the framework as primarily an investigative tool and was assiduous in noting themes which had not been suggested there.

The individual portraits are followed by a commentary in which dominant themes which arose from them are introduced. This commentary points towards the thematic analysis which follows in Chapter 9. This thematic meaning-making process drew on a second entry into the data (see page 139), a revisiting which allowed for a more



deductive process of coding and a critical evaluation of the span of the data set, rather than a focus on individuals. This revisiting of the data revealed more detail of themes not foregrounded in the portraits. The portraits were not amended as a result of the second entry into the data but are retained as authentic representations of the first stage of a two-prong process of analysis. However, they remained influential in the process of abstraction and generalisation (Richie & Spencer, 1994) chronicled in Chapters 9 and 10.

### **Biographical details of the participants**

Considerations around the extent to which biographical details should be included in the portraits proved complex. The first draft of the portraits included a fair degree of biographical and professional details of participants. However, it became apparent that internal readers found it relatively easy to identify these participants from the information given. Concurring with Corden and Sainsbury's (2006) view of the priority of protecting participants' identities, I therefore removed or amended details which would allow individuals to be recognised. In so doing, I sacrificed elements of potentially interesting contextual data in order to preserve the anonymity of which participants were assured. Individual portraits now include only the sparsest of biographical data, that which I deem crucial to understanding the portrait's meaning.

The limitations of this approach included the difficulty of presenting a clear picture of the range of academic qualifications held by participants. It was also challenging to develop an understanding of the impact of participants' discipline in terms of their first, and sometimes subsequent, degree on the formation of their academic identity. Becker and Bryman's (2004:345) struggle to get 'the balance between disguise and distortion' in such presentations resonated with me. Given these opposing pressures, and privileging the ethic of care for individuals, I decided to present a composite participant profile at Table 8.1 below. In so doing, I provide appropriate contextual information for the reader without unduly compromising participants' anonymity.

Following Wiles et al. (2008), where such detail would still reveal the participant's identity to colleagues, despite its tabulated form, key characteristics have been 'softened', that is, made less precise, in order to overcome this issue.

I move on now to summarise the key characteristics of the whole sample. The seven participants, five women and two men, ranged in age from approximately 25 years to more than 60 years. Their disciplinary backgrounds included Art and Education, English, History and philosophy and Bachelor of Education. Six of the participants were senior lecturers and one was a professor; two had been employed at the University for 15 years or more and the remaining five for ten years or less.

One participant had prior experience of employment in another HE organisation. All seven members of the group had a higher degree, either a Masters or Doctorate, or were working towards one. In terms of professional identity prior to joining the University, one participant was previously a Support Centre Leader and five were teachers, two of whom also had Local Authority Advisor roles. One participant was an unqualified teacher.

When participants were invited to indicate both their experience of undertaking research prior to their current post and of academic writing using a five-point scale (none, a little, some, a lot, extensive) they all selected one of the first three options (none, a little, some). Two participants did not have publications at the time of the research; four had from 1-10 and one had more than 30.

| Characteristics and exemplification of characteristics by sample |  |                                  |                                |   |
|--|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Sex  |  |                                  |                                |   |
| Male<br>2  |  | Female<br>5                      |                                |   |
| Age  |  |                                  |                                |   |
| 25-35<br>1   | 35-45<br>1                             | 45-55<br>4                       | 55-60<br>0                     | 60+<br>1  |
| Disciplinary background (1 <sup>st</sup> degree)                 |  |                                  |                                |   |
| Art and Education<br><br>2                                       | English<br><br>2                       | History and philosophy<br><br>1  | Bachelor of Education<br><br>1 | Bachelor of Education – English specialism<br>1 |
| Higher degrees   |  |                                  |                                |   |
|  | Masters<br>5                           | Working towards a doctorate<br>1 | Doctorate achieved<br>1        |   |
| Length of employment at current university (years)               |  |                                  |                                |   |
| 0-5<br>3   | 6-10<br>2                              | 11-15<br>1                       | 16-20<br>0                     | 20+<br>1  |
| Current role   |  |                                  |                                |   |
| Lecturer<br>0  | Senior Lecturer<br>6                   | Reader<br>0                      | Professor<br>1                 |   |
| Length of employment in other HE organisations (years)           |  |                                  |                                |   |
| None<br>6  | 1-5<br>1                               | 6-10<br>0                        | 11-20<br>0                     | 20+<br>0  |
| Professional identity prior to joining the university            |  |                                  |                                |   |
| Support Centre Leader<br>1                                       | Teacher + Local Authority Advisor<br>2 | Teacher<br>3                     | Unqualified teacher<br>1       |   |
| Experience of undertaking research prior to current post         |  |                                  |                                |   |
| None<br>3  | A little<br>2                          | Some<br>2                        | A lot<br>0                     | Extensive<br>0                                  |
| Experience of academic writing                                   |  |                                  |                                |   |
| None<br>1  | A little<br>4                          | Some<br>2                        | A lot<br>0                     | Extensive<br>0                                  |
| Publications   |  |                                  |                                |   |
| None<br>2  | 1-10<br>4                              | 11-20<br>0                       | 21-30<br>0                     | 31-40<br>1                                      |

**Table 8.1** Composite participant profile

## **The portraits**

Having given contextual data for my participants, I now present their individual portraits.

### **Olwen's portrait**

Olwen joined the university over 20 years ago. She has published numerous articles and book chapters over a 25 year period.

#### ***The context of the university***

Olwen's love is the development of learning and teaching. On joining the university, she was surprised at the lack of obvious focus on learning and teaching within the organisation. This sense of surprise has developed over time into deep disappointment in the institutional positioning of learning and teaching and its development. Olwen sees herself as holding an oppositional view to the organisation regarding how to build sustainable success in learning and teaching. She favours the long-term building of openness and trust rather than a quick-fix approach which often *'looks good on the surface but is dust underneath'* (Olwen's story: segment 22).

This view of the university as promising much but delivering little was well-illustrated in the choice of a dead branch as the centre-piece of her collage. The buds on the branch symbolise the potential of staff for developing learning and teaching. The buds should be nourished, in Olwen's view, by the senior management team of the university, represented by the main branch. However, this branch is dead. It is broken, disconnected in some way from the staff and students it should serve and its nurturing, developmental potential is therefore curtailed.



**Figure 8.1** Image 1 from Olwen's collage

Instead of an interest in individuals then, Olwen sees the university as focusing on systems and procedures, rules and regulations which can dominate working practices. Olwen sees this as inhibiting change, with procedures, once decided upon, being unchanged over time despite shifting patterns of student intake. Moreover, this focus on an instrumental way of working suggests a de-valuing of anything which cannot be measured. In her collage, Olwen depicts this tension through the contrasting images of the blue straight line of university procedures and the more organic collection of staff clustered around her on the right hand side of her collage.



**Figure 8.2** Image 2 from Olwen's collage

### ***The importance of reading and writing***

Reading and writing have always been a source of delight, excitement and nourishment for Olwen. Perhaps because of this positive relationship with the written word, Olwen began to engage in academic writing early in her career. Whilst still working as a teacher she responded to a call to practitioners to write for a newly-launched journal for a national association of professionals working with language-impaired children, and was delighted to have her article published.

The link to practice continues to provide the imperative to write for Olwen, who views teaching as '*an intellectual activity*' (Olwen's interview: segment 2). Other rationales, such as organisational or School pressures to write in isolation from an authentic purpose, are more easily rejected. Olwen does not reject the function of writing as a conduit for knowledge-creation within the academy however. She responds very positively to opportunities to present the results of authentic writing at conferences for example, where practitioners have the opportunity to build knowledge collaboratively.

Colleagues, however, do not necessarily subscribe to Olwen's view of the symbiosis of reading, writing and practice. This can lead to an undervaluing of reading and writing within the School and a frustration in Olwen that she cannot always find the opportunities to influence or support the development of learning and teaching practice at institutional or School level. For Olwen, such support is not simply about the development of skills but of enabling others to be '*the people they aspire to be*' (Olwen story: segment 18).

### ***A developing professional identity***

Reading and writing are, then, for Olwen, linked to who she is within the university. Despite viewing her professional identity as a process of development, a commitment to practice and practice development, underpinned by the clear moral purpose of achieving social good, has been a constant theme in Olwen's professional life. As a young professional, teaching enabled her to effect change in children's life chances even within an organisational structure which was limiting. Olwen sees this rooting

of teaching in moral purpose to be mirrored in the work of many of her colleagues within the School of Education, with only lip service paid to more managerialist university systems and procedures which on the surface seem to drive organisational policy and practice. In this she sees herself as in accord with her colleagues.

As illustrated in Figure 8.3, this positioning is reflected in her situating herself (represented by the glass prism) at a distance from the senior management team (represented by the main branch) and nearer to her colleagues (represented by the pebbles), despite her leadership role.



**Figure 8.3** Image 3 from Olwen's collage

However, Olwen does notice differences of view between herself and some of her colleagues around the place of research and writing in practice development. She was aware that some colleagues and leaders in her early teaching posts held an anti-intellectual stance and feels that such a view may retain some currency within the School of Education. Teaching can be seen to be the primary purpose for some. Such a view can cause difficulties for those who wish to develop the research aspect of their work, and indeed, feel the institutional imperative so to do (Lucas, 2006). They may be seen by colleagues who are more teaching-focused as less professional, as the imperative to support student learning seems dissipated by the demands of other scholarship activities.

Although the wider university is positioned very differently, offering ‘*brownie points*’ (Olwen interview: segment 22) to those who publish, this too is problematic. Here the problem arises through the lack of connectivity between the institution’s understanding of the impetus for writing and the individual’s own view of the relative value of the activities which make up their role. Olwen’s belief is that for many colleagues within the School, developing as more effective teachers trumps developing the writing aspects of their role. For Olwen, such standpoints are not just about choosing one activity over another but about identity itself, about having a view of oneself as a teacher for years and then changing and being ‘*some other person*’ (Olwen interview: segment 22).

### **Tamara’s portrait**

Tamara joined the university five years ago. She has published a jointly-authored book chapter with colleagues from the School of Education.

#### ***The context of the university***

Tamara found joining the university de-stabilising. Although not having a fully-formed view of what the wider university would be like, she did have a very clear vision of her potential role within the School of Education. This was largely based on her own experience of studying for a master’s degree. Studying for this degree re-ignited Tamara’s passion for learning. She wanted to support other teachers in moving their practice forward through enquiry, at master’s level or otherwise. She believed that working in a School of Education would give her the opportunity to support busy teachers with the academic side of the enquiry process, using reading to scaffold their examination of and experimentation with new ideas, thus moving practice forward.

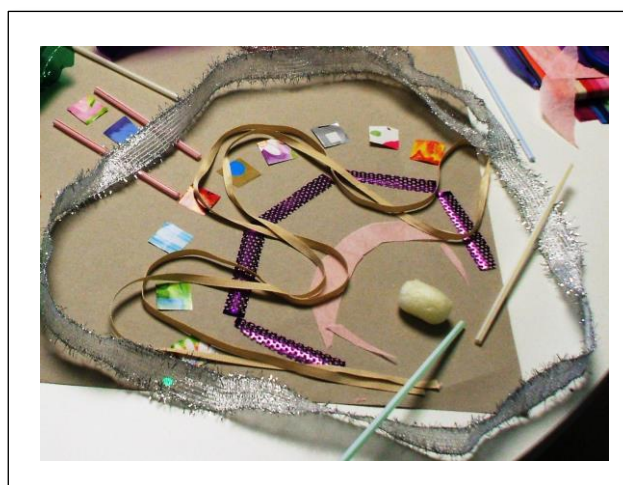
On arrival in the School, however, she found that this vision was not shared. Prior to joining the School she had imagined it as a cohesive entity, akin to her previous primary school, underpinned by a shared vision and aims. On arrival, she found



instead a more disparate body, where individuals pursued divergent paths. This School context had an impact on the development of Tamara's professional identity within the academy.

### ***A professional identity***

Tamara had a robust identity as a teacher in school. In her first year of teaching she learned a great deal about her own values, her educational beliefs and how these influenced her developing pedagogy. Exploring educational literature as part of her master's degree gave her the language to articulate what she had discovered about her own practice and its underpinnings.



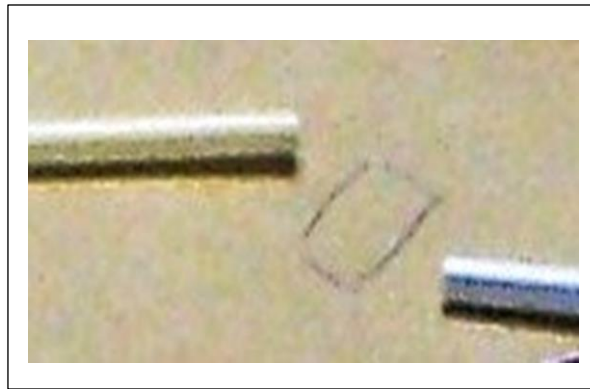
**Figure 8.4** Image 1 from Tamara's collage

Tamara sees this as a very positive time in her professional life, when the master's '*brought everything together*' (Tamara's explanation of her collage: segment 13). The sparkly ribbon in the collage shown in Figure 8.4 represents both this positivity and how the master's both encapsulated and allowed Tamara to make sense of her previous practice.

This teacher-based identity was challenged however on arrival at the university where Tamara understood the culture to indicate that previous knowledge, gained through

years as a practitioner, was irrelevant. This, together with an uncertainty about the fit of her role with her aspirations for supporting teacher development through enquiry, made the transition process a challenging one, in which she felt '*kind of lost*' (Tamara's story: segment 11). She is now addressing this by trying to align herself with certain individuals within the School, trying to explore how they work successfully in a complex organisational context.

The professional confidence she felt in her role in school has still not been wholly equalled, however. Tamara sees this as due to the lack of connection between her previous experience and the roles she has held to date within the university.



**Figure 8.5** Image 2 from Tamara's collage

Figure 8.5 shows gaps in the connecting straws in her collage, emphasised by the square drawn around the empty space. These gaps represent this interruption in the growth of her professional expertise and aligned professional confidence. They also reference a lack of connection between Tamara and the schools she seeks to support. The impact on her professional identity is represented by a burst balloon, shown in her collage as a balloon with an explosion drawn on it.



**Figure 8.6** Image 3 from Tamara's collage

The balloon represents the professional that Tamara expected to be within the university. However, that expectation has been exploded by the reality of her day to day role. She is hoping that a new role she has been appointed to in the School will allow her to realise her vision of an ongoing dialogue between the university and schools, based on teacher enquiry.

### ***The importance of reading and writing***

When embarking on her own master's degree, Tamara found that reading about and reflecting on her own practice '*opened up a whole new world for me*' (Tamara's story: segment 9). She aspired to use her university role to ignite this passion for learning in other teachers by stimulating '*thinking opportunities*' (Tamara's story: segment 19) for those in schools. Tamara believed that her new role at the university would focus on reading and research as strategies to develop practice; indeed, that this type of scholarly activity would underpin '*everything that was done in the School of Education*' (Tamara's interview: segment 13). However, this vision has not been fully realised. Tamara feels that there is an urgency around researching and writing within the School and the wider university but is not aware of appropriate support systems which she feels she needs to aid her development into an active researcher. In this, she positions herself as different to '*those who have an understanding and a strength in it who do it*' because she '*does not know necessarily how to approach it*' (Tamara's interview: segment 9).

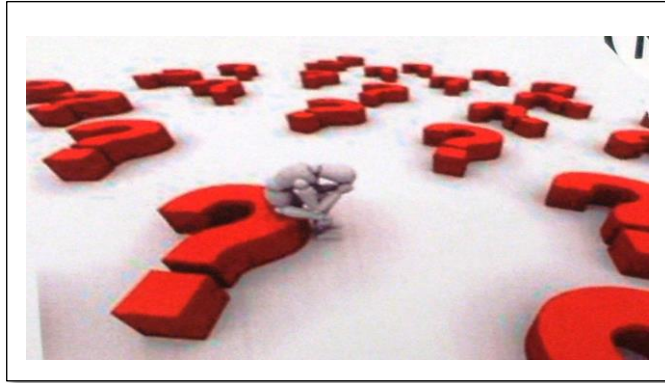
Tamara is aware of courses within the wider university which she could access to develop her skills and understanding in writing for publication. However, she is more affected by the comments of colleagues who suggest she might write a paper for a conference but do not exemplify what such a paper might look like. For Tamara, embarking on such an undertaking alone is too difficult. She assumed that groups of people would form investigative teams and that she would be part of such a group whilst she learned how to write the type of academic articles expected within the university. However, such structured, collegial support systems are not currently part of the School structure.

### **Tamsin's portrait**

Tamsin joined the university very recently. She has not yet embarked on writing for academic publication.

#### ***A developing professional identity***

Tamsin still locates herself very much as a teacher. As a teacher in school, her identity was rooted in her belief in the ability of education to influence lives and, to some degree, to effect a social justice agenda. On her arrival in the university she was unsure about whether a teacher identity remained legitimate. This concern was stimulated in part by a realisation that her previous experience was open to question and even deemed invalid by some colleagues in her new context. The move to university was a difficult transition for Tamsin. She used the picture shown at Figure 8.7 to explain her feelings at this time. The question marks she sees as legitimate in any change but the despair she felt was more unexpected and hence more difficult to deal with.



**Figure 8.7** Image 1 from Tamsin's collage

The transition was rendered all the more difficult by the stark contrast between Tamsin's experience of herself as a new professional at the university and her past view of her professional self when a member of a senior leadership team in a school. Here, she introduced many of the initiatives which supported the ongoing development of her school. Some aspects of this work resulted in her being asked to address external conferences and give workshops to support others seeking to develop their practice. On joining the university she felt de-skilled however, and wondered if she '*was up to this*' (Tamsin's interview: segment 15).

This emanated from a feeling that '*I lost the identity I had been building up for 12 years*' (Tamsin's story: segment 9) and that she would have to begin again to build a new professional identity. Tamsin initially considered that she may have made a mistake in moving into the higher education sector. However, she is now more settled in her role, having become convinced that focusing her role around the education of children remains appropriate, despite her change of context (3S3). This realisation is grounded in her getting to know her students more as individuals and seeing that she has '*something to offer*' (Tamsin's explanation of her collage: segment 4) to the education of those who will themselves go on to be the educators of children.

Tamsin feels that she is now breaking through into the university and is beginning '*very tentatively to see what it is all about*' (Tamsin's explanation of her collage: segment

2), a tentativeness well-illustrated in Figure 8.8. This tentativeness is connected to her attempt to develop a new professional persona which is appropriate for her new context, without abandoning the values which have sustained her professional identity as a school teacher. Considering the place of research in her practice is one aspect of this developmental process.



**Figure 8.8** Image 2 from Tamsin's collage

### ***Research in the university***

Tamsin sees the university as having a research agenda which it clearly communicates to its staff. A focus on research during the School of Education staff conference emphasised the expectation that all staff should seek to become research active. This was initially a source of concern for Tamsin. Despite being experienced in expressing herself in written form, she initially lacked confidence in her ability to contribute anything worthwhile to the field. However, sharing her thinking with others in her subject team has convinced her that she does have insights to contribute to move practice on. It is this link to practice which remains fundamental for Tamsin. Without it, she sees little purpose to research.

### ***Reading and writing***

Tamsin's early view of herself as lacking in the expertise necessary for her new role rested in part on her lack of experience in using reading and research to underpin her own practice. She found herself having to do lots of reading around subjects as she

prepared seminars because she did not have at her '*fingertips the theory or academic research*' (Tamsin's story: segment 12).

Although she found studying at master's level herself to be highly significant in her own learning, she felt that she needed to legitimise it through grounding it in practice. It is only since her arrival at the university that Tamsin has come to see the real value of research to the development of this practice. She is now reflecting on how evidence can be used to support educational practice and how she can play a role in driving research forward.

Early in her university career, Tamsin identified a dichotomy between what was important in education, that is, developing effective learning and teaching practice, and research. She is now beginning to re-conceptualise this relationship although she still talks of the '*leap to the other side*' (Tamsin's explanation of her collage: segment 7) which the university represents. This 'leap' is well-illustrated in Figure 8.9 below.



**Figure 8.9** Image 3 from Tamsin's collage

Tamsin still sees research and teaching as separate scholarly activities. However, the 'Evidence in Education' image (Figure 8.10) which dominates the left-hand side of her collage, symbolises her growing recognition of the importance of the research aspect of her role.





**Figure 8.10** Image 4 from Tamsin’s collage

Tamsin has chosen to use her personal self-development time to work with teachers in a local school to initiate the use of enquiry methods to support developments in learning and teaching practice. Next year, she hopes to work with the same teachers to develop the reading and research side of this project. She now sees the importance of the university’s role in the development of practitioners which she would have previously challenged, and wants to position herself as a legitimate part of this enterprise.

### Flora’s portrait

Flora joined the university seven years ago after over 30 years as a primary school teacher. She has published a number of jointly-authored articles with colleagues, contributed a book chapter to an edited volume and given a number of conference papers as part of a team of colleagues. Flora will be retiring from full-time work at the university later this year.



### ***The context of the university***

Flora joined the university with clear expectations about the aims and scope of her new role. Whilst a class teacher, she had always enjoyed working alongside students who came to her primary school, either as part of their initial teacher training programme or on work experience. She believed the post she had secured in the School of Education would enable her to extend this aspect of her work. Her assumption was that she would be instructing students how to become teachers in the same formal way that she had been taught. Instead, she found that she was expected to encourage a far more reflective approach and that she would be working not only with trainee teachers but also with students from disparate backgrounds on a BA in Education Studies programme.

A well-crafted induction programme helped Flora to adjust to these changed expectations. This programme allowed her to explore her new working environment collaboratively with other new and experienced colleagues. Flora wonders if the university or School of Education had specific aims in mind when this induction programme was developed. Whatever the case, the programme was very effective in helping her to feel more at ease in the different aspects of her new professional role.

### ***The importance of reading and writing***

On joining the university Flora had no idea that her role would include '*speaking at conferences, writing articles which others may find interesting, contributing a chapter to a book ...*' (Flora's story: segment 10). This aspect of her professional identity has developed over time however. In her first couple of years at the university her focus was primarily on planning modules and preparing for teaching sessions. She saw this as a legitimate priority, given the challenges of her new teaching role.

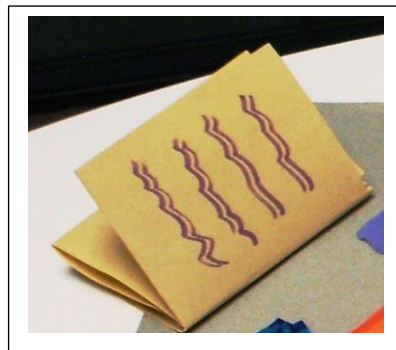
Academic research and writing were outside of her previous expectations of herself as a teacher. However, as part of the induction programme, Flora and her new colleagues produced a conference paper which they then gave together. This activity is again constructed by Flora as part of a planned professional development programme:

*'We've got you to a conference, we've got you to say something'* (Flora's interview: segment 35). The collaborative nature of this endeavour was important to Flora. Encouragement from others helped to build her confidence in her ability to write and present in a way she would be proud of, a pattern which Flora notes repeats in her professional journey. The collage which Flora produced represents this professional journey as linear, a clear trajectory starting on the bottom right of the collage with her time in primary school and building across to the top left of the collage to encompass her work within the School of Education.



**Figure 8.11** Image 1 from Flora's collage

Flora sees the publication of a book chapter as the '*culmination*' of numerous smaller writing projects within the university (Flora's explanation of her collage: segment 46). This book is positioned at the far left of her collage, at the end of her professional development journey to date, and extends over the end of the sheet of paper on which the collage was made.



**Figure 8.12** Image 2 from Flora's collage

This positioning may be significant, given Flora's possible interest in undertaking a Doctorate in Education after her retirement from full-time work. Her academic work could still continue, past the confines of the ending of her current role within the university.

### ***A developing professional identity***

Flora's professional identity as a teacher remains strong. Her collage begins with an image of Flora as an adult, represented by the orange shape in the middle of the pegs, surrounded by '*lots of little people*', the 37 children who made up her first reception class (Flora's explanation of her collage: segment 3).

Flora has retained her passion for early years' education, and is now interested in sharing what she knows about this with others. This was facilitated in an unexpected way through her involvement in a project to support colleagues in Malaysia who were franchising the BA Education Studies from her university. Flora visited Malaysia and worked with colleagues there to develop their understanding of the programme and to develop it so that it could become fit for purpose in their particular context.

Flora acknowledges that the breadth of her experience means that she has much of value to share with others. However, despite some publications, she still construes the writing aspect of her role as under-developed and essentially personal to her rather than as having the potential to influence the wider educational discourse: '*My writing ... still remains a part of me and not shared with others*' (Flora's story: segment 17).

### **Frederick's portrait**

Frederick is coming to the end of his first year as a lecturer in the School of Education. He has published a number of conference papers and jointly-authored curriculum resources.

### ***The context of the university***

Frederick teaches on an academic undergraduate programme in the School of Education. He understands research development to be very much on the agenda for the university, believing there will soon be an expectation for all staff to be research-active. Despite this impetus, he perceives himself to be alone on his programme in wanting to be a '*serious academic*' (Frederick's interview: segment 30) and in the minority of those who feel that the programme should be research-informed. He similarly feels that his view of students' potential to engage positively in a research community is not shared. The focus instead appears to be on learning for employability (5C7), with an '*intellectual inquiry approach ... sidelined*' (Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 32).

Frederick wants both to draw on the knowledge created by the research community and to contribute to this discourse. He sees limited possibilities of realising this aim in his current context however and is uncertain that his ambitions to become '*a serious academic*' (Frederick's interview: segment 30) can be achieved within the School of Education at his present university. He believes he may need to leave in order to satisfy his professional needs: '*that being undernourished, being under-watered, being under-fed, that bit is the thing that would make me want to move*' (Frederick's interview: segment 32). This undernourishment emanates from a feeling of professional isolation, of having an alternative agenda to the majority of his colleagues within the School: '*I'm not normal, and I don't feel normal in the School*' (Frederick's interview: segment 29). This awareness of difference impacts on Frederick's sense of his developing professional identity.

### ***A developing professional identity***

Frederick's current conception of his professional identity is dominated by tensions between its component parts. On arrival at the university he was advised by a colleague to make sure he had a '*jaggedy profile*' (Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 12), that is, an ability to operate in all the spheres which make up an academic role. This image was appealing to Frederick but the level of difficulty in

combining the different spheres was unexpected. This difficulty is well-illustrated in his collage, illustrated at Figure 8.13 below, by Frederick's choice of separate, contrasting-coloured pipe cleaners to represent the different aspects of his role. These aspects are joined by pegs, a difficult procedure, rather than being organically linked as part of a self-nourishing whole.

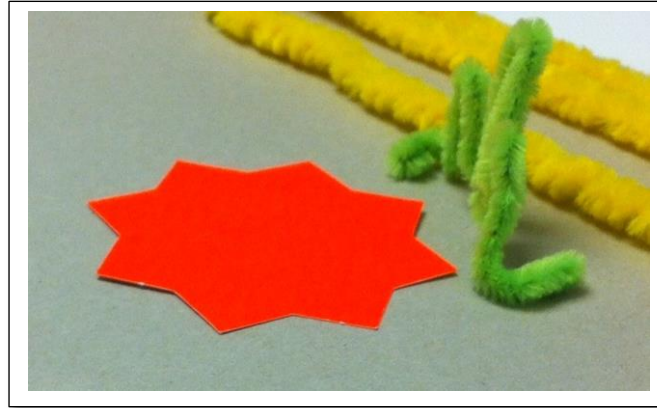


**Figure 8.13** Image 1 from Frederick's collage

Although Frederick talks of his professional identity as being defined by three activities: '*teaching, admin. and research*' (Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 83), it is the relationship between teaching and research which dominates his collage. He understands this relationship as complex. He represents teaching and research separately, at maximum distance from one another, emphasising both the difficulties he finds with uniting these aspects in his professional life and his perception of how they are seen within the School. Frederick conceptualises teaching within the School as '*manmade*' (Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 46), a production line process where students arrive, are taught and then leave 3 years later without ever finding a path to the research which Frederick so values as the impetus to personal and professional growth.

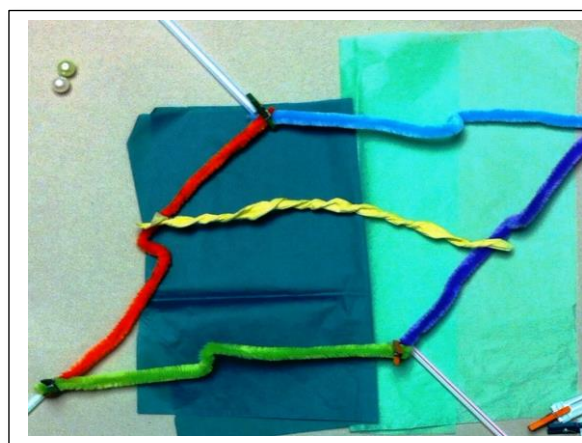
The potential for growth does exist, symbolised by the pearls used to represent seeds in his collage. It is hampered, however, by a synthetic approach to teaching which focuses on the end product of assignments and degrees rather than learning for its own sake. Frederick sees research, conversely, as more natural, rooted, personal and in

need of '*tending*' (Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 45). He represents it in his collage, in Figure 8.14 below, as green grass, standing tall above the other images.



**Figure 8.14** Image 2 from Frederick's collage

He emphasises that there are connections between research and teaching, but that these are difficult to negotiate. These connections are represented variously in his collage. The first representation, in Figure 8.15, is a yellow, twisted piece of card, which stretches between research and teaching, emphasising the difficulties of connecting one aspect with another. It is a '*rough connection, one that is hard to do anything with. You can't walk over it because it's all kind of twisted*' (Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 31).



**Figure 8.15** Image 3 from Frederick's collage

The second representation is of a river which flows between research and teaching but is difficult to navigate. Frederick wants to strengthen the connection between these two elements to support not only his own learning and professional development but also that of his students. Academic writing, a key aspect of research, is problematic for him however.

### ***Attitudes and approaches to academic writing***

Frederick is clear that he wants to develop a profile as a research active academic. More than this, *'that is what I want to be known for'* (Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 69). He sees publications as shoring up his reputation both in academia and with students who will recognise publication as a sign of his expertise. Despite this clarity, Frederick often doubts his ability to become the academic he wishes to be. This self-doubt springs predominantly from a lack of confidence in writing. It is the *'bit I struggle with ... I think it is more to do with confidence'* (Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 24).

Frederick sees support within the School for developing his research activities and profile as well-meaning but generally ineffective. Conversations and actions regarding research development are often superficial. Research active colleagues make suggestions about writing papers but these suggestions are then not followed through: *'it's all kind of corridor conversations and it's never ... it's not legitimised in the process or in the systems the School has'* (Frederick's interview: segment 7). He hopes that the research aspect of his role will soon flourish as the teaching side currently is doing.

### **Sam's portrait**

Sam joined the university seven years ago. He has published several articles and a jointly-authored book.

### ***The context of the School of Education***

Sam's background on joining the School of Education differed from many of his colleagues, the majority of whom had previously been teachers in school. Sam does not have a background as an educator. Sam regards this as having both negative and positive implications. He admires the confidence and '*natural ability in terms of communication*' (Sam's explanation of his collage: segment 41), in a classroom exhibited by some colleagues. More positively, he feels he is not hidebound by some of the attitudes towards teaching which emanate from a wholly school-based career.

Sam sees himself as in some ways both an insider and an outsider in the School of Education - '*I'm a bit of an odd bod all the time*' (Sam's explanation of his collage: segment 49). This is due both to his more diverse background prior to joining the School and to a different mind-set in terms of the School's future development strategy. He can be frustrated by what he perceives to be an over-focusing on school-based solutions to the need to diversify the School of Education's activity (Sam's explanation of his collage: segment 43). He would promote instead a broader understanding of education and of what the School of Education might offer a wide range of educational professionals.

### ***A developing professional identity***

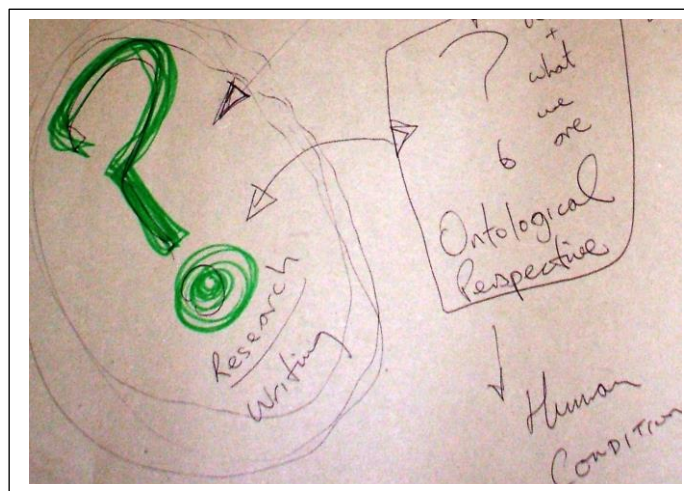
Sam began his representation of his professional identity by identifying the central ideas which guide his work. He is particularly interested in pedagogy, in thinking about how best to learn. He is also interested in philosophical thinking, in reflecting on the best way to think about who we are and what we are. He describes this perspective as an ontological one.

Sam recognises this ontological perspective on learning as a key aspect of his professional identity. He would like others to consider him a reflective person: '*I'd like to be considered as somebody who thinks about who I am or what I am, why I am doing something*' (Sam's explanation of his collage: segment 4).



However, he sees such a reflective approach to professional development as increasingly challenged by a growing national and local interest in the measurement of performance. This performativity agenda impacts not only on the values which underpin professional working but also on day to day activities such as teaching. For Sam, teaching is not solely about supporting students to achieve high marks in assessments. Instead, he seeks to explore with them the wider questions of who we are and how we learn.

He sees the questioning process as a hallmark of transformative teaching and learning. Its importance to his professional identity is underlined by the dominance of the image of the green question mark in his collage and by the arrow which links it to his underpinning belief in the value of an ontological perspective on learning.



**Figure 8.16** Image 1 from Sam's collage

Sam regrets the increasing adoption of a system in which the measurement of discrete learning outcomes is deemed more important than the development of an understanding of the '*big picture*' (Sam's explanation of his collage: segment 11). His concern is that a focus on performance closes down opportunities for learning through a reductionist approach, reducing learning to aims and measurable outcomes.

As a professional, he feels this tension between real learning and learning for the sake of assessment. For both student and teacher, such an approach can ‘*shackle the excitement of learning*’ (Sam’s explanation of his collage: segment 19) and reduce the development so valued by professionals to a merely technical activity. Sam sees a similar tension reflected in the research experience.

### ***Attitudes and approaches to research and writing***

Sam contrasts the imperative to produce tangible, measurable research findings with the desire to explore and to ‘*capture the unknown*’ (Sam’s explanation of his collage: segment 29), to learn that which cannot be quantified or sometimes even clearly defined. Sam always attempts to encourage his students to undertake open, qualitative enquiry, ‘*this question which can never be quite nailed*’ (Sam’s explanation of his collage: segment 31). However, he is aware of the tension between such open enquiry and the dominant research paradigm of the academy in which a scientific process of literature review, conceptual framing, research questions, activities and findings continue to dominate.

Working within an alternative paradigm, Sam is interested in exploring the meaning which people make of experience, and in this would term himself a phenomenologist. His doctorate focuses on learning more about how people who work with children and families across various occupational sectors experience being a professional.

### **Sara’s portrait**

Sara joined the School of Education 15 years ago. She has published two jointly-authored book chapters with colleagues from the School of Education, in addition to a plethora of professional guidance material for teachers.

### ***A developing professional identity***

Sara's professional identity as a teacher remains exceptionally strong. Indeed, her personal identity is also to some extent defined through her subject, without which she is '*not like a whole person*' (Sara's explanation of her collage: segment 168). Her commitment to supporting student achievement underpins her view of her purpose within the university. She is particularly keen to achieve this through working in teams, rather than on her own, as she finds the collegiality of team-working conducive to her productivity.

Sara sees her professional identity as largely self-chosen rather than externally prescribed. However, external pressures arising from the changing nature of university activity have meant that more top-down management practices are now in place which may well impact on academics' developmental pathways in future.

Sara perceives there now to be a more market-focused agenda, born of the need to compete successfully with other providers, as judged through national mechanisms such as league tables. This impacts on an academic's ability to '*be yourself*' (Sara's explanation of her collage: segment 115).

### ***The context of the university***

Sara's collage illustrates the increasingly complex nature of her academic identity within a changing university, where she is uncertain about the extent, nature and importance of the multifarious layers which make up her role.



**Figure 8.17** Image 1 from Sara's collage

The strength of the central image of a multi-layered role was underlined by Sara's inability to move away from this image to represent other aspects of her identity elsewhere on the collage. This was a source of frustration for her but also provocative, as demonstrated in this quotation from her commentary on her collage-making: *See I'm coming back in again aren't I, go away ... I wonder why I'm doing that* (Sara's explanation of her collage: segment 24).

Her multi-layered role is further complicated by Sara's tendency to expand the scope of tasks, due to her ability to locate them in the '*bigger picture*' of the School and University's strategic plans (Sara's explanation of her collage: segment 164). This, coupled with her position on many cross-university committees, informs Sara's view of how academics are viewed across the university. She perceives a growing lack of respect for academics from both students and those in non-academic roles and a feeling that academics do not sufficiently understand or adequately contribute to the workings of the wider university.

The research and knowledge creation aspect of academic work appears to be '*largely invisible*' to both students and non-academic colleagues (Sara's explanation of her collage: segment 137). Sara sees this aspect of academic work as also an issue for

some academics within the School of Education who do not necessarily construe it as a central part of their role.

### ***Research, writing and knowledge-creation***

Research is seen by Sara as one of '*lots of other things*' you are required to do in the university (Sara's explanation of her collage: segment 111). However, currently she is not undertaking any formal research or writing although she is beginning a project looking at the role of Programme Tutors. This relative lack of productivity is in contrast to her experience in her previous roles. Her background in the Local Authority Advisory Service meant that she was heavily involved in conducting research, sometimes nationally-funded, and in the development of publications which shared conclusions with practitioners and others.

Sara enjoys research and writing but finds that it '*always falls to the bottom of my list*' (Sara's explanation of her collage: segment 90). However, a rising imperative around research, both from the central university and the School, means that she understands that she needs to be modelling the development of a more research-active profile. Sara perceives the need for this modelling to arise from colleagues' views that they are already working to capacity. However, she feels that if she can make more effectively visible the way in which practice in the School is already research-informed, this would enable colleagues to embrace research and writing. She is clear that she has the capacity to impact on colleagues' research and writing activity in a positive way.

Sara feels that, as a School, we should be developing a culture where it is the norm to write and give conference papers and to publish journal articles. However, she sees that such a culture shift will need to be prompted both by example and by putting structures into place which support academics in developing their skills and confidence in this aspect of their role.

## Participants' responses to the portraits

The portraits presented here are selective, heavily interpreted stories of participants' understandings of their professional identity and its relationship with their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. However, each participant's portrait was clearly recognisable to the individual. To fulfil my intention of working collaboratively with participants, as outlined in Chapter 6, draft portraits were shared with participants to allow them to comment and amend the text where necessary. Their responses to these drafts were evidence of the efficacy of the portraits in capturing the essence of participants' experiences.

Many participants referred to their portrait's accuracy and the fact that it *'feels right'* (email response to draft portrait from Tamara). More surprising was the strength of participants' emotional response to what they read. Both Olwen and Tamara refer to the emotional impact of reading their portrait. For Olwen, seeing her story in writing enhanced her sense of agency and suggested the importance of allowing others to explore and articulate the deeper purposes of professional activities.

*I found it quite emotional reading this as I felt it captured me and my work and my thinking and feeling about my work. It is useful to see it in writing as it gives you a feeling of strength and the thought that maybe I should make some of the things here more explicit to others. It emphasises the importance of articulation and the sharing of deeper purposes of work that may be hidden in day to day practice.*

(Email response to draft portrait from Olwen)

Tamara's emotional response seemed to stem from the starkness of the message around her degree of contentment in her past and present professional self, revealed to her through her portrait.

*I feel a little emotional after reading that – especially the part where you say the master's was a positive time for me. It all went wrong from there!! Many thanks for this, it is interesting/strange to read your own story.*

(Email response to draft portrait from Tamara)

Tamara's response also contains a note of thanks which was common. Frederick, for example, described his portrait as 'amazing', adding 'thank you so much'. It appeared that participants found the portraits powerful in terms of their ability to hold a mirror up to their professional identity. Whilst collecting data from my participants, I decided to make my own collage and to record my thoughts as I made it, as I asked the participants to do. A colleague then interviewed me and wrote my portrait for me. Reflecting on my own portrait I could empathise with, if not fully explain, the portrait's power. The opportunity to explore my professional identity in both words and images seemed here, as in Leitch's (2006) study, to have released an understanding of my professional self which I perhaps did not acknowledge but which was instantly recognisable. The learning from this process contributes to my reflections in Chapter 12.

Tamsin's email response to her draft portrait differed from the other participants in highlighting the shifting nature of professional identity. Whilst affirming the accuracy of the portrait at the time of data collection, she was nevertheless surprised by the change which the few weeks between making her collage and the receipt of her draft portrait had wrought.

*I'm surprised at how that timid creature peeking out seemed so apt to me at the time of our conversation! I feel that I have undergone quite a rapid change in a matter of only weeks and that I am growing in confidence. I believe that it is because as the teaching demands have fallen off for the year I am finally getting time to really evaluate my role in the School of Education and consider the direction I wish to go in.*

(Email response to draft portrait from Tamsin)

Tamsin's explanation for this change is interesting, focusing as it does on her ability to evaluate her role once the demands of teaching diminished. A clear sense of agency is shown here, a taking of control of her professional future, which was not perhaps so evident in her portrait.

The development of the portraits, including my own, was a useful catalyst for revealing some of the assumptions which I brought to this study. Brookfield's (2005) suggestion that this revelation and recognition is the most difficult part of challenging preconceived ideas was certainly demonstrated in my case. I began this study with the view that the activities of research and writing for publication were wholly positive and desirable. I held this view partially because this accorded with the expectations of my university. I am generally inclined to do what is expected of me rather than to challenge norms. However, this position was perhaps also a by-product of my own sense of professional confusion and inadequacy on joining the university. Publication was something I could do. My publication record put me in a position of strength, of self-perceived superiority even, when other indicators of professional competence were more difficult to establish.

The development of the portraits caused me to question this thinking however. I began to revise my view of publication as indisputably positive and develop a more questioning approach to the relationship between organisational imperatives and individuals' actions. I became wholly convinced of the imperative to develop a theory through my study about identity, research and publication which would better recognise the complexities of working as an academic in an institutional context which is both demanding and shifting. As such, my study's implications for policy and practice would be more grounded in the reality of the professional life of the new academic (Gough, 2014). A number of themes emerged from the portraits which gave direction to this theorising agenda. These themes are introduced below.

### **Arising themes – linking the portraits to the subsequent thematic analysis**

The portraits were designed as presentations which capture the perspective of the individual on a complex set of experiences. They also act as pointers to the themes which direct the theory arising from this study.



The first theme arising from the portraits is the critical influence of pre-conceptions of the university and School of Education on participants' early experience in their new HE role. Many participants, such as Olwen and Tamara, held strong pre-conceptions which were tested by the actual experience of working in their new posts. The appearance of this theme in the majority of portraits indicates that the relationship between imagined and actual experience of higher education would benefit from further exploration.

The challenge to professional identity which a disconnect between the imagined and actual experience of higher education occasions points towards another key theme. In some portraits, participants (for example, Tamara and Tamsin) describe the deskilling impact of their professional move to the university and its destabilising effect on previously secure professional identities. For other participants (Sam, Frederick and Olwen for example), the challenge takes the form of a feeling of difference from colleagues, based around disciplinary background, attitudes to teaching or to research and publication. The nature and impact of this challenge to professional identity would benefit from further examination.

An understanding of the nature of, and relationship between, the various elements which make up academic practice arises as a key theme throughout the portraits. In some instances, participants (for example, Flora and Tamara) focus on their confidence or perceived expertise in discrete aspects of their academic role. In others, participants (for example, Frederick) declare specific commitment to a particular activity. Sam and Olwen, alternatively, problematise the university's perceived attribution of importance to one academic function over another. Contrasting conceptualisations of the activities of research, writing and teaching in particular underpin many of these responses. An investigation of the nature of the various elements which make up academic practice, together with the nature of the connections between these elements, would consequently be of clear value.

The linked themes of authenticity and moral purpose often underpin participants' commentary on the other thematic areas introduced above. Olwen's portrait alludes overtly to her perceived need for authenticity in developing her professional identity and for a moral purpose to underpin the activities she undertakes. This explicit reference is mirrored in Tamsin's portrait in her commitment to working for social justice in her professional role. Other portraits variously reference the need for an authentic response to learning (see Sam and Sara's portraits) and to a developing professional identity (see Flora, Tamara and Frederick's portraits). Further exploration of the themes of moral purpose and authenticity would clearly be of value. I move on in Chapter 9 to this thematic analysis of the data.

## **Chapter 9**

### **A thematic analysis**

In Chapter 8 I presented seven individual portraits. These portraits were offered to fulfil one intention of this study, that is, to explore and honour the way in which particular individuals within my School of Education see the worlds of their university and School of Education. I also wished to explore the resultant impact on their conception of their professional identity and the mediating effect of this self-view on their academic writing practices.

Within this doctoral study I seek to develop a theory around this connection. Such a theory would inform both my own and my organisation's understanding of how to support academics in developing as purposeful and productive academic writers. To support this theorising agenda, in this chapter I adopt the practice used by some phenomenologists of looking for commonalities across the data in order to distil the essence of something (Ladkin, 2005). This allows me to make meaning through the discovery of connections (Polkinghorne, 1988), or perhaps disconnections, which support a developing understanding. This search for commonalities is best served at this stage through a thematic analysis and presentation of my data. This allows for a focus on each discrete research question in turn, whilst allowing the surfacing of explanatory insights which extend across all questions. These insights underpin the theoretical explanation, given in Chapter 10, of the relationships between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing.

The meaning-making process in this chapter draws on both an inductive process of discovery which underpinned the portrait production and on a revisiting of the data to allow a more deductive process of coding, as explained in Chapter 7. In summary, I

used the explanatory concepts from my conceptual framework to support a process of abstraction and generalisation (Richie & Spencer, 1994), the result of which is offered in this chapter. In using the first three research questions as an over-arching framework for a thematic analysis, I follow Patton's (2002) advice in ensuring that the process of analysis remains grounded in the central questions which I seek to illuminate through the analytical process. Evidence to illuminate my fourth research question is threaded through my discussion of questions 1 - 3. These questions are:

1. What meaning do academics in a School of Education in a post-1992 university make of the social world of their university and School of Education?
2. How do these academics understand their professional identity?
3. What meaning do these academics make of the practices of research and academic writing?
4. What influences this meaning-making?

I bring a reflexive approach to this analysis through an ongoing discussion of my own position and perspective on the issues raised by my participants.

### **Making meaning of the university and School of Education**

My first research question focuses on the meaning which academics in a School of Education in a post-1992 university make of the social world of their university and School of Education. I am interested in the way in which the field (Bourdieu, 1997) of the university and of the School of Education are figured by my participants, both prior to their arrival and once in post. As discussed in Chapter 3, I use the term 'field' to mean the social world of the university and School (Gee, 2011). I use the term 'figured' to refer to the act of making meaning, of developing an understanding of, in this context, a given social world. This exploration deepens my understanding of the interrelationship between individual academics and the institution in which their attitudes and approaches to academic writing are formed and re-formed. I begin this

section by focusing on participants' conceptions of the university. I then consider participants' conceptions of the School of Education in which they work.

### ***Conceptions of the university***

Four of the seven participants held strong pre-conceptions of the academic world they were about to enter, prior to taking up their posts. For some, this world was figured around teaching and learning. Olwen, for example, imagined the world of the university to be one in which learning and teaching would retain the centrality they had in her previous school experience whilst being supported by additional scholarship activities such as reading and writing. Flora adds to this learning and teaching focus an attendant understanding of the university as satisfying the employability agenda (Collini, 2012) in conceiving of her role as a teacher of other aspiring teachers.

Other participants imagined reading, research and writing as taking centre-stage. Tamara, for example, expected to be able to focus on the use of reading, writing and the exploration of practice to ignite teachers' passion for learning, something she had experienced through her own master's study. Frederick shared this construction of the university, agreeing with Hamlyn's (1996) view of the centrality of the pursuit of higher learning as a mission for the academy. Translating this vision into practice, Frederick imagined he would both support students in discovering the joys of research and be supported himself in becoming a '*serious academic*' (Frederick's interview: segment 30) who contributes to the discourse of the research community. The use of the term '*serious academic*' is noteworthy. Frederick appears to be constructing research as the sole indicator of a legitimate academic role. His value base for research activity is thus in sharp contrast to Tamara's, where research is a means to an end, a catalyst for the development both of knowledge and of a disposition which enhances learning and teaching. These different understandings of the function, nature and value of research, the value of learning and teaching, and of the relationship between them, permeate the data.

As in my own experience, prior expectations were commonly tested by the actual experience of working in the university. In some cases this challenge was immediate, particularly where expectations focused on learning and teaching. Olwen's passion for developing learning and teaching was challenged by her view of the institution's lack of focus on this aspect of its work. She found:

*... it difficult to connect with the university. I didn't find them student centred and didn't understand why they would want to do things other than teach!*

(Olwen's story: segment 8)

Olwen's conception of the university in this comment is revealing. She does not imagine her own values to be challenged simply by organisational rules. Instead, she implicitly acknowledges that organisations are made up of people and that this set of people appeared to have values which were out of alignment with her own. The challenge to her sense of agency, and to her capacity for developing social capital within her new organisation, appears strong.

This testing of a sense of professional validity is evident in Tamara and Flora's reflection on their discovery that they would be working with very different cohorts of students to those they had imagined. This was not simply an issue of having to change a lesson plan or two. Instead, it undermined their professional confidence, with Flora's view of herself as an expert professional diminished by having to teach outside of her area of expertise. The complexities of a disciplinary view of identity, recognised by Becher and Trowler's (2001) second edition of their seminal work on academic relations, are exemplified here. The challenge to these participants' self-view as experienced educational professionals was severe, despite many years' experience as school teachers.

For other participants, the sense of disconnect between their 'imagined' university and the perceived reality developed over time, being associated with changing institutional agendas. Sara joined the university when her aim of developing a long-term, strategic approach to supporting student achievement was applauded. She now sees the

university as wedded to a short-term approach to development which focuses on income generation in a sector in which competition is increasing. Such short-termism leads, in her view, to issues for staff who seek to retain an authentic sense of self. Sam joined the university to enact his commitment to fostering a reflective approach to professional development. However, he sees his values and practice challenged by a growing national and institutional interest in the measurement of performance, a perspective which pursues the assessment of discrete learning outcomes at the expense of allowing students to develop an understanding of ‘*the big picture*’ (Sam’s explanation of his collage: segment 11). For both Sara and Sam, changing national and local imperatives for higher education appear to challenge the value systems which brought them to the academy.

Sam’s frustration with the increasing performativity of a sector in which enjoyment and depth of learning are subjugated to quantifiable outcomes is exemplified in his comments below.

*I don’t know if this is a received notion of mine but it seems to me that the performance aspect tends in some ways to oppose the questioning ability, the creative thought, because it wants to close things down . . . what I would say is it’s a reductionist mode of thinking about what learning is. It seeks to reduce sessions and motives for learning and things to quantifiable aims and measures so it needs to quantify and compartmentalise the process into ‘well today’s session is about these outcomes’ and it’s about dut,dut, dut.*

(Sam’s explanation of his collage: segment 17)

Sam’s challenge to organisational practices is interesting. Arguing against adopting an employability agenda, he concurs with Acemoglu and Autor’s (2013) suggestion of its impact in reducing individuals to a stock of productivity-supporting knowledge and characteristics. Instead, he joins Frederick and Tamara in seeing a higher purpose for learning. The notion of agency (Giddens, 1984), the human ability to influence organisational structures, is introduced obliquely here in Sam’s suggestion that he does not have to follow the organisational norms brought about by a performativity agenda. His view of these norms as oppositional to his way of thinking but not entirely

dominant suggests the possibility of an alternative relationship with organisational requirements which may, in turn, influence the imperatives themselves.

Sam's attitude challenged my own thinking. My current study arose from my earlier attempt to support individuals in meeting organisational norms through increasing their writing and publication activity. In so doing, I was not challenging these norms but instead, trying to bend myself and my colleagues to fit them. My own predilection to follow the rules, to fit within structures rather than to contest them, was in some ways played out in my writing support activity. This realisation is important to this study. It indicates a way of seeing which inevitably impacts on the data I chose to foreground and on my interpretation of this data. This understanding is helpful when reflecting on and, where necessary, challenging my initial interpretation of my data and also in taking a deeper critical perspective on this study's implications for practice, as discussed in Chapter 11.

The majority of participants did not focus overtly on organisational imperatives in relation to research when talking about the wider university. Olwen, Frederick and Tamara were the only participants to comment overtly on the increasingly explicit organisational agenda that all academics should become research active. However, demands relating to research and academic writing dominate participants' reflections on the professional context of the School of Education.

### ***Conceptions of the School of Education***

All participants understand there to be an expectation within the School of Education that academics engage in research activity. This expectation is rehearsed formally and regularly on occasions when the School community comes together such as the annual School conference and School meetings. Some participants did not foresee this expectation. Flora, for example, did not imagine that her work within the School would include research and scholarship activities such as



*speaking at conferences, writing articles which others may find interesting, contributing a chapter to a book ...*

(Flora's story: segment 10)

Others expected to be involved in research activity but now experience a disconnect between the stated research culture of the School and the absence of practices through which this culture might be realised. Tamara, for example, is positive about developing as an active researcher and writer. She feels the urgency of the School's focus on developing its academics as researchers and published authors. However, her expectation, prior to joining the School, that research would underpin all School activity has proved inaccurate. Likewise, anticipated systems to induct her into a vibrant research community have not materialised.

*I kind of had the view that it would be an underpinning of everything that was done in the School of Education, that I think probably now I had the assumption that there would be groups of people who would be interested in developing and you would work in teams to explore aspects ... and maybe I would join a team and maybe I would have an insignificant role in it but I would be learning the process. But that didn't happen.*

(Tamara's interview: segment 13)

Tamara does feel that she is given verbal encouragement to develop the research aspect of her role but that this is not then followed through with practical support. Frederick similarly refers to the '*corridor conversations*' (Frederick's interview: segment 7) around writing which he finds exciting. However, his sense of himself as a writer is not adequate to support him in acting on vague suggestions about writing a paper.

Tamara and Frederick's construction of their development route as a researcher is revealing. Both focus on the role of others rather than their own activity. Frederick's statement that the impetus to write is '*not legitimised in the process or in the systems the School has*' (Frederick's interview: segment 7) highlights this lack of proactivity. An application of Giddens' (1984) structuration theory would suggest that such processes and systems could gain legitimacy not only through the discourse and

practice of the School leaders but also through the academics who form its community. Academics within the School could, for example, exert their agency and overcome structural constraints to form the kind of research teams which Tamara imagined. However, neither this line of activity nor its implications were mentioned by my participants.

Concerns about legitimate agency within organisational structures are not prevalent in the data. Instead, tensions appear to focus on individuals' views of their own capabilities in developing the research and writing aspect of their academic role. Even Frederick, committed to his intention of becoming '*a serious academic*' (Frederick's interview: segment 30), does not seem to have the confidence to step further into the less familiar territories of research and writing. This attitude could be understood as a straightforward example of privileging the known, sub-identity as teacher over the relatively unknown activity of researcher (Swennen et al., 2010). However, analysis of the data appears to suggest the need for a more nuanced interpretation, arising from a view of the School of Education as a shifting phenomenon.

For my participants, the figured world of the School of Education is experienced not so much as a static entity but as a shifting world, formed and re-formed by the activities of those who work within it. This position, strongly argued by Holland et al. (1998), suggests an understanding of the potential for agential change. However, this forming and re-forming appear to be understood by some participants as defined by the beliefs and actions of others rather than themselves. Frederick, for example, holds that colleagues on the undergraduate programme on which he teaches do not see themselves as academics, preferring to highlight the vocational aspects of the programme.

*They were talking about pretty much vocational programmes and the term academic or intellectually demanding seemed to be hushed, ignored, which was odd, mainly because I do intellectually demanding, academic subjects.*

(Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 33)

Frederick is making a number of judgements here. He suggests individuals' conceptions of themselves as academics can be determined by an evaluation of their allegiance to particular pedagogical views. This is clearly open to debate. Moreover, he makes an overt, values-based distinction between, in his view, lower-value vocational aspects and higher-value academic aspects of the programme he teaches on. For Frederick, the School appears populated by people who do not share his analysis of the relative value of the different functions of the university and who privilege its vocational rather than academic role. There is a sense here of being at odds with colleagues and of a lack of fit with the School.

Olwen similarly finds herself at odds with her colleagues in her perceptions of the relationship between scholarship activities. For her, the issue is not one of relative value but of connectivity, of an understanding of the nature of teaching in higher education. Within the School of Education, internal posts relating to learning and teaching are advertised on a regular basis. These might be for the leadership of a programme or for a cross-programme development project. This is a formal opportunity for colleagues to present themselves as an educational professional, through an application and interview process. Olwen finds it significant that colleagues often do not feel the need to link learning and teaching to wider scholarship activities on these occasions.

*Other people around me will write applications and go for interviews for things about learning and teaching and will never ever mention anything they have read because learning and teaching is somehow not like that.*

(Olwen's explanation of her collage: segment 15)

Like Frederick, Olwen perceives an anti-intellectual stance to prevail within the School, indeed to form its institutional habitus (Reay et al., 2009b). She believes that colleagues who remain teaching-centred see the imperative to support student learning as dissipated by the demands of other scholarship activities.

*It's almost like you lose your professionalism somehow .... um.... in the eyes of people who might have a more teacher-focused view of what it means to be on a campus at certain hours and doing certain things with students.*

(Olwen's explanation of her collage: segment 22)

The use of the term 'professionalism' is significant here. Olwen seems to be suggesting that an individual's self-view as a professional, formed through a focus on activity, can be challenged by an alternative view, shared by a dominant community of practice in the School, where teaching and supporting students trumps all other academic activities. This is significant in two ways. Firstly it implies agreement with Frederick's view of the dominance of a teaching orientation within the School. More interestingly, it suggests an understanding of identity as a work in progress. My second research question seeks to explore further how this process of identity development is conceptualised within the professional context of the School of Education.

### **Conceptualising professional identity**

I am interested in the development of identity in the socially-constructed world, that is, how my colleagues come to be the kind of person they are recognised as being, 'at a given time and place' (Gee, 2001:99), in the School of Education. This focus may suggest a view of identity as wholly self-constructed. This is not the case. Instead I accept Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) proposal of the active term 'identification' as more helpful than the passive term 'identity' in its conceptualisation of identity as activity. As argued in Chapter 3, individual identities are constituted not simply by how we see ourselves but by how we perceive others to see us and by the practices we undertake at a given point in time. This understanding of the development of identity as activity allows me to approach my data through the lens of the linked questions, how do we identify ourselves? How do others identify us?

### *Identity as a work in progress*

Concurring with Erickson's (1975) view of identity as a work in progress, I am conscious of the potential of this viewpoint to skew my analysis of my data. Despite this, there is a strong indication that all of the participants in this study tend to conceptualise identity not as a fixed state but as in transition. The influences on developing identity are understood as multi-faceted. Many of the participants who were previously school teachers begin the story of their professional journey with reflections on the lasting impact of early classroom experiences. Olwen makes the most explicit statement about the power of this influence, proposing the direct influence of her first experience of teaching children on her current professional persona.

*I began teaching young children and they influenced me to become who I have become.*

(Olwen's story: segment 1)

A dominant image in Flora's collage also references her time in school. The collage shows her as a teacher of a reception class, surrounded by '*lots of little people*' (Flora's explanation of her collage: segment 3), her first pupils.

Many participants indicate that their substantive identity within the university remains that of a teacher. By 'substantive identity' I mean their perception of their core identity, a way of being which is always at the heart of someone (Nias, 1989, in Murray and Male, 2005), although potentially modified over time by life experience. Despite obvious tensions here, such a self-view does not negate a view of identity as fluid. My participants do not strongly exemplify patterns found in the literature around the retention of a school-teacher identity on entering the academy (see, for example, Boyd & Harris, 2010; Maguire, 2000; Murray, 2008). Instead, a sense of substantive teacher identity seems to arise from a process of re-alignment of the teacher-identity previously formed in school. Tamsin, for example, is secure in her teacher identity within the university – '*I am a teacher*' (Tamsin's story: segment 8). However, this certitude follows a period of identity confusion, when her new role

appeared to be demanding that she relinquish the centrality of teaching in the make-up of her professional persona. In this, she could be seen to have enacted Bourdieu's belief in the internal challenges instigated by the introduction of an existing habitus into a new field (1999, in Reay et al., 2009b).

*And between September and April there was this period of feeling, actually I need to let go of that a bit more (Note: points to representation of teaching on collage) but I think I have come back to thinking, no, I am a teacher, this whole business of education is ultimately about the children and that's where I'm fixed and that is ok.*

(Tamsin's story: segment 3).

The phrase '*that's where I'm fixed and that is ok*' suggests an alternative interpretation however. This 'fixing' does not necessarily imply support for Bourdieu's (1997) view of the deterministic properties of habitus. Instead, Tamsin seems to be asserting her sense of agency, her ability to decide who she becomes, to fix herself in the new context she has encountered. This agential action has been achieved through a critical evaluation of what is of value to her. Through a questioning what is of worth (Webb et al., 2002), Tamsin has now taken charge of her developing identity within the School of Education.

This understanding of a clear values-base for the development of a professional identity appears important to other participants, but is often associated with a sense of strain or challenge in fitting into a new organisational environment. Frederick refers to a '*strain on your identity*' (Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 22) whilst Tamara articulates it as feeling '*kind of lost*' (Tamara's story: segment 11). Despite having been in the School of Education for 5 years now, the professional confidence she felt in her school role has still not been matched. One explanation of such feelings would be to see participants as exemplifying the struggle which the move from school to academy brings, resulting in an expected fall in confidence and sense of professional self (Dinkelman et al., 2006; Clemens et al., 2010). However, this explanation does not hold for Frederick who joined the university without prior experience in school. Given the dominance of the concept of 'teacher' in participants'

conceptualisations of their identity, it remains useful, however, to explore more fully how my participants understand the activity of teaching within the School of Education.

### ***Conceptualising teaching in the School of Education***

Participants expressed divergent views on the aims and practice of teaching, and by extension, the activity of learning, in the School of Education. Sara's commitment to supporting student achievement is central to her view of her purpose within the university.

*So the big picture in the School for me is successful students who understand what they have learned and achieved. So it is not just about the mark they get, it is about how they understand what they have learned and achieved. And it is also about how staff set the scene for that to take place and get the satisfaction for that taking place. That is success for me. Now when it all comes together the knock on effect of that of course is that we do well in the league tables and all those things.*

(Sara's explanation of her collage: segment 45)

Sara's conceptualisation of learning is interesting. The distinction she makes between learning for the purpose of assessment and learning for understanding highlights her commitment to supporting the development of deep learning in her students, that is learning which is motivated by students' intention of engaging with and understanding a subject due to their intrinsic valuing of it (Biggs, 1999). Sara, as teacher, is central to this learning. In a further comment, she constructs herself as orchestrating student achievement, even though she realises this is not always the best thing for her students' long-term development.

*I am never going to let anyone fail unless they actively choose to do that. But otherwise I ... sometimes I realise that I should step back more and let go and let them fail sometimes but I just can't stop myself from just having one more go, one more go.*

(Sara's explanation of her collage: segment 55)

Sara's focus on students' passing or failing is interesting, indicating the embeddedness of the performativity agenda in her thinking. Her purpose as a teacher becomes to support the development of skills, knowledge and understanding which will allow her students to be judged as successful by external measures, contradicting the commitment to deep learning evidenced in Sara's explanation of her collage at segment 45 above. This construction of the role of a university teacher may be partially explained by the fact that Sara's main teaching lies on the one-year, Post-Graduate Certificate in Education programme, through which post-graduate students are prepared to be teachers. This Initial Teacher Education programme requires students to achieve government-set standards in order to gain qualified teacher status. This emphasis may well lead to a vocational, perhaps instrumental, view of learning and teaching for both academics and students.

Flora, who also works predominantly on an under-graduate Initial Teacher Education programme, similarly focused in her early academic career on ensuring that the structural supports for her teaching and student learning were in place. Despite encouragement from others to extend her view, she remained more restricted in her professional persona, sustaining a classroom-based perspective (Hoyle, 1975).

*People were saying, 'Well what are you looking into, what are you reading, what are you researching?' and I thought, well, I'm just doing what I need to do for the next day and the next week and I'm planning modules and things.*

(Flora's interview: segment 11)

Such a view appears to have derived from necessity rather than choice however, with available time needing to be spent on short-term, teaching-related tasks in order to survive the day to day demands of her role. Having gained in experience, Flora now undertakes a range of scholarship activities, including presenting at conferences and contributing to publications. In this she has moved towards colleagues who hold an extended view of the nature of learning in the academy and the teacher's role in facilitating it.



Olwen views teaching as ‘*an intellectual activity*’ (Olwen’s interview: segment 2). She sees a natural symbiosis between the scholarship activities of reading, writing and practice and delights in opportunities to enhance her professional expertise through combining them (Olwen’s interview: segment 11). She believes in the pursuit of a wide range of scholarship activities to support practitioners, both colleagues and students, in building knowledge together around things they are passionate about. Olwen sees such collaborative working as not only impacting on professional development but as having deeper implications, enabling colleagues and students to be ‘*the people they aspire to be*’ (Olwen’s story: segment 18). Brew and Boud’s (1995) belief in the influence of scholarship activities on being is exemplified through Olwen’s experience of the identity-forming nature of learning, and of her facilitative role as a teacher.

Some participants share fundamental aspects of Olwen’s conception of what it is to be a university teacher. Sam is particularly interested in pedagogy, in thinking about how best to learn (Sam’s explanation of his collage: segment 2). He sees becoming an effective teacher in higher education as an ongoing process of development, supported by student feedback.

*.... so how to teach it I find is always an ongoing problem that needs to be discussed with the students throughout and surfaced, so teaching it I suppose, going onto that pedagogy, is that it’s got to be nice and visible and transparent but also contested or evaluated in the sense of ‘Was that clear?’ or ‘Do you think we could do things differently next time?’ or you know ‘How are you finding this? Did anyone learn anything?’*

(Sam’s explanation of his collage: segment 12)

With student learning positioned at the heart of this approach, Sam sees a process of questioning to be the hallmark of transformative teaching and learning, emphasised by the dominating presence in his collage of a huge green question mark. For him, teaching is linked to philosophical thinking, to stimulating students to consider who and what we are. In this, his values as a teacher link directly to Olwen’s; both have a belief in the power of education to influence identity.

Tamara's view of herself as a university teacher is also rooted in considerations of identity. Experiencing her own master's degree as leading to a '*much deeper understanding of who I am as a teacher*' (Tamara's explanation of her collage: segment 13), she imagined facilitating this experience for her students through supporting them in enquiry and reflection. This view of her role as teacher has been challenged by the reality of her work within the university. The close relationship between schools and university which she hoped to foster has failed to materialise. Moreover, an expected sense of shared vision and aims in terms of learning and teaching within the School of Education has also proved illusory. However, she does sense a way forward through aligning herself with particular individuals in the School.

*I think I am influenced by certain individuals yes, who I am probably trying to align myself to, trying to explore how they work and they are successful and I think that is probably part of my hoping and part of my staying if you see what I mean.*

(Tamara's interview: segment 18)

The concept of affinity identity has a clear explanatory value here, with its proposition of the practices we undertake as identifiers of membership or non-membership of a particular group. Tamara is seeking to align herself with individuals who are similar to her in their aims and values. In his view of affinity identity as 'the product of the marking of difference and exclusion', Hall (1996:17), conversely, focuses on non-membership. The concept of difference has particular resonance for some of the participants in my study and has some explanatory value for individuals' conception of the relationship between identity and academic activity.

### ***Being different in the School of Education***

The tensions implicit in the concept of difference in this study are best exemplified by my analysis of the data relating to Sam and Frederick. Sam describes himself as a '*bit of an odd bod*' (Sam's explanation of his collage: segment 49) within the School in terms of his professional background. Not having previously been a school teacher differentiates his skill-set from that of the majority of his colleagues. He feels he does not have the '*confidence and natural ability in terms of communication*' (Sam's

explanation of his collage: segment 41) which some of his colleagues take for granted. Conversely, he can be frustrated by the narrowness of pedagogical outlook of some colleagues who he sees as still *'hidebound to certain teaching attitudes of what goes on in a classroom'* (Sam's explanation of his collage: segment 41). He is critical of what he sees to be an over-focusing on teacher-education in the School, to the detriment of the development of new learning and teaching opportunities with students from across a wider range of professional settings. Sam's pedagogy arises from an open approach to knowledge. Describing himself as a phenomenologist, he is interested in how professionalism is experienced across a wide range of settings, and sees his role as a teacher as helping students ask and investigate questions of particular personal relevance.

Frederick also sees himself as different from his colleagues. Like Sam, this difference is strongly embedded in his understanding of a range of divergent beliefs about the role of a teacher within the university. As discussed above, Frederick is convinced that the undergraduate programme he teaches on would be strengthened by being more research-informed. However, a more powerful feeling of difference arises from an imagined career trajectory which is unlike that pursued by the majority of his colleagues within the School. He wishes to follow an academic route to career success, with the publication record which this implies. He believes that he is differentiated from his colleagues both by this career plan and by his belief in the inseparability of teaching and research within the academy.

*... I think it is partly because I'm not normal, and I don't feel normal, in the School ... but I think it's because on the whole, and it doesn't make sense to me ... I teach on an academic programme. It is **the** academic programme in the School at undergraduate level but in a way I'm the only person who teaches on it in a way who wants to be a serious academic. And that doesn't sound right, it sounds inappropriate I think but I'm the only who eventually wants or feels as though, maybe other than one or two, who feels that, in order to do this (Note: points to teaching side of collage), it needs to be research-informed.*

(Frederick's interview: segment 30)

Frederick's view of what it means to be a 'serious academic' is limited, appearing to focus entirely on becoming research active. He does wish to continue to develop as a good teacher but sees the research side of his role as of the highest value in academic terms. Interestingly, his collage focuses on the difficulties of aligning the different aspects of scholarship implicit in the academic role within the context of the School of Education.

Frederick's belief in a natural connection between research and teaching arises from his pedagogical stance. In this, he echoes Westergaard's (1991) understanding of the co-dependency of both activities in the development of an enquiring mind. Frederick aspires to develop this enquiring mind himself and support its development in his students through authentic engagement with the research activities which he puts at the centre of his teaching.

*It's all about dialogue, it's all about conversation, about getting them to do stuff and research and kind of feel what it's like.*

(Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 27)

Frederick is somewhat dismissive of colleagues who do not share his view of the symbiotic relationship between teaching and research within the academy. Taking a pedagogical stance in which he positions teaching and research as connected processes of coming to know (Brew & Boud, 1995), he is frustrated by those who retain, in his view, a transmission model of teaching which relies on the expertise of the educator. Sam's frustration similarly focuses on the limiting effect of his colleagues' pedagogical viewpoint on the work of the School. Rather than responding more openly to the demands of a changing higher education context, he perceives an over-reliance on comfortable connections with established partners in schools.

There are interesting tensions revealed in both Sam and Frederick's self-view. Both seeking to belong, they equally both revel in their difference. There is even an implicit feeling of superiority, particularly for Frederick, in proposing that they are seeking a new identity whilst their former school-teacher colleagues attempt to retain what he

interprets as a previously-formed professional self. Analysis of the data throws an interesting light on these assumptions. Tamsin, for example, talks of the de-stabilising impact of entry to the university on her sense of professional self and of a profound sense of loss. Such de-stabilisation is common for teacher educators, having been previously established as successful and experienced professionals in a school context (LaRocco & Bruns, 2006). However, the loss of equilibrium appears to arise at least initially from a feeling that her previous teaching experience was deemed invalid by some colleagues in her new context. Here, she challenges Frederick's understanding of a School of Education in which teaching is prized above all else. Instead, Tamsin suggests the School actually values the wider aspects of the academic role such as research. Her insecurity in her professional identity is seen to arise from a fear of inadequacy in these activities and a need to develop them. For Tamsin then, the feeling of difference – to her past self, to her new colleagues – appears to be linked to a temporary inauthenticity of self, proposed by Goffman (1959) as common in those diverted from a previous professional path built on individual values and interests.

Interestingly, for Tamsin this inauthenticity was resolved not by a return to the teacher identity she had previously espoused but by finding the links between her belief in the ability of education to influence lives and her own research activity. Initially doubtful of her ability to contribute anything to the field, Tamsin has now found, through sharing her thinking with others, that she does have insights which she can develop through research and which will influence practice. It is this link to practice which is fundamental for her. Without it she sees little purpose to research. For other participants, research is understood quite differently, as discussed above. Further investigation of these divergent understandings of the practice and meaning of research begins to illuminate my third research question, that is, the meaning academics make of the related practices of research and academic writing as part of academic practice.

## **Making meaning of the practice of research**

Sam makes the most overt statement of his understanding of the concept of research. He conceptualises research as open, thoughtful enquiry, an exciting exploration of an ever-changing unknown. He contrasts this view with what he sees as the dominant discourse around research within the academy, which he describes as seeking normative theories and tangible conclusions. A number of other participants reflect this focus on research as an iterative, developmental process. Frederick constructs research as creative and organic. Interestingly, Tamara rejects the word research in favour of enquiry.

*Well it's probably, research is the wrong word, it is the enquiry that is exciting. I think that is what my sparkly thing was. I was given the opportunity to enquire into practice and it was exciting, it was motivating, you know.*

(Tamara's interview: segment 24)

Enquiry is represented in Tamara's collage as a bright, sparkly ribbon, its motivational qualities being perfectly signified by the material she chose to represent it. It is the qualities of enquiry into practice which Tamara appears to find so inspiring however, rather than the qualities of research, which to her appear oppositional to this. Stenhouse's description of research as 'systematic enquiry *made public*' (1981:104 original emphasis) may provide a clue to the distinction which Tamara is making here between enquiry and research. Enquiry for Tamara appears to be a scholarly approach to teaching; it is exciting and revelatory. The 'making public' aspect, the writing she associates with the research process, is conversely challenging and apparently beyond her.

An alternative explanation is that Tamara has been influenced by the wider discourse around research within the academy, where it is conceptualised as a potential source of income through grants and funding mechanisms. Olwen is alone amongst the participants in making any overt reference to this wider discourse, and is again alone in mentioning the organisational prestige accrued through documenting the results of

research in writing through practices such as the Research Excellence Framework. However, an understanding of research as an organisational imperative permeates many of my participants' reflections.

Flora, for example, acknowledges the power of a sense of duty as a driver for producing publishable accounts of research activity. Here, such duty explains a forced compliance with an organisational research strategy (Gordon, 2005).

*... I would feel the guilty party if people were asking what have you put on your research information system and I thought, actually I haven't put anything on there.*

(Flora's interview: segment 52)

For Flora, research appears to be just one more thing to be done to serve institutional rather than personal ends, a position associated with researcher anxiety rather than fulfilment (Åkerlind, 2008). However, a later comment prompts a refinement of this understanding of Flora's relationship with research as wholly driven by structural imperatives. Now close to retirement from full-time work at the university, Flora wishes that she had begun to develop wider scholarship activities earlier in her academic career. She would have liked to have undertaken doctoral study. As suggested by Lamont's (1992) work on value attribution, it seems likely that Flora would have developed into a more active researcher if she could have done so in a way which satisfied her personal goals. However, she was initially hesitant in pursuing this path.

Despite pressures to conform to organisational requirements, participants generally do not subscribe to the managerial agenda as an authentic rationale for their engagement with research activity. Instead, their rationale is derived from what they see as the primary function of research, namely, to support the development of practice. Olwen, for example, comments on the way in which she uses her research activity to support the extension of her practice and her development as an academic.

*Practice and experimenting with practice was what I liked to do. I liked to take risks and try new things. I developed a narrative module because I was bored with a transmission approach and this developed to a research project which was funded and I presented it at a number of different conferences here and abroad.*

(Olwen's story: segment 11)

The nourishment which research provides for this development of practice is clearly articulated in her collage and linked explanation. She explains the way in which research activity supports her ongoing quest to develop her practice.

*And I suppose the things I think I believe about learning and teaching is that you have to nurture the reading and the research and the understanding and that's where I feel I get my sort of nourishment from in a way.*

(Olwen's explanation of her collage: segment 7)

The majority of participants concur in their view of research as nourishing the development of practice. As educationalists, the participants in this study tend to give higher regard to research which produces Mode 2 knowledge, that is, application-oriented and dialogic knowledge which has the intention of promoting and supporting change (Nowotny et al., 2003). Tamara's reflections on her own MA exemplify this stance and underline her belief in the value of enquiry into practice in invigorating teachers.

*I talked to people, I read things, there were fresh ideas. I tried things out, it was fun and that's what I want for teachers you know and times are different I am aware but that's what we still want to keep ourselves motivated and aware and passionate about all this and that is what I see enquiry helping to do.*

(Tamara's interview: segment 24)

For Tamara, such scholarly activity not only underpins the development of practice but also impacts on teachers' ongoing positive attitude towards their day to day work. Tamsin widens the reach of research, focusing on its function of enriching both student teachers' practice and, through them, the children they will eventually teach.



*If all of this research doesn't have a purpose which supports the school and the children and our education system we are being very indulgent.*

(Tamsin's interview: segment 24)

Her introduction of the concept of indulgence is interesting. Referencing researcher affect, that is, the researchers' underlying feelings about research (Åkerlind, 2008), it again, as with other participants, suggests a view of research as irrelevant unless it impacts positively on practice. In privileging a practice-development function of research over a knowledge-creation function, Tamsin exemplifies an internal orientation towards research (Brew, 2001b) focusing on its potential for enabling development and change rather than on its capacity to produce personal or organisational prestige. This is not a view my university would necessarily subscribe to. Despite the increasing requirement for research impact, formalised through the REF, research for knowledge-creation purposes retains its organisational currency.

An implicit tension surfaces here then between the nature of organisational imperatives and personal motivators. Interestingly, Sam and Frederick, coming from a non-school teaching background, tend towards a broader view of what constitutes valuable research. This view encompasses its potential for knowledge-building. Whilst retaining a student focus, Sam nevertheless argues for research as a means to develop student understanding of the more complex ontological issues we face as human beings. Frederick argues, if not for the superior value of an informative rather than educative aim for educational research (Hammersley, 2003), then at least for parity.

*Whereas to me that's really important, if that could lead to some sort of change, if that could provide an improvement somewhere or create an idea that people discuss and then use then that makes that worthwhile.*

(Frederick's interview: segment 16)

An interesting question is raised here. All of my participants recognise the value of research. For some, this value arises from its capacity to enhance practice, for others it is also linked to its knowledge-production function, its personal development

properties or its career-making potential. Despite this common valuing of research activity, many participants do not succeed either in undertaking research or in sharing its results through publication. Why might this be? Participants' professional self-view as academics seems to throw some light on this question. Their understanding of the nature of academic practice may offer further explanatory insights.

### ***An understanding of academic practice***

Participants vary in their understanding of academic practice. Tamsin conceptualises such practice as disparate components which combine to make a whole. In talking of developing her research activity as '*doing the bit I'm saying I felt I didn't have*' (Tamsin's story: segment 18), she exemplifies Boyer's (1990) interpretation of separate but linked scholarship activities. Flora has a similar view of the quality of the connection between research and other elements of her academic practice. Teaching, working overseas and research are represented as discrete components in a linear, chronological collage which has few overlaps. This understanding of academic practice as fragmentary rather than unitary (Gough, 2014) appears to have added to new academics' feelings of confusion and displacement. The story of Flora's induction into the academy is illuminating here.

Flora experienced a well-crafted induction programme which operated in that particular form for only one year. This programme supported her in undertaking a self-study alongside other new colleagues as they worked towards understanding their new professional context. It culminated in a joint presentation of their self-studies at an academic conference and the writing of a linked publication. Interestingly, Flora constructs her induction experience as part of a centrally planned programme of professional development through which she and her colleagues were initiated into the separate scholarship activities which make up an academic role.

Flora sees her developing academic identity as something which is shaped by the organisation. Her view of the elements of this identity as discrete was initiated by her understanding of her induction programme as an introduction to the separate elements

which make up this identity. Malcolm and Zukas (2009) suggest that other structural activities, such as the allocation of hours to disparate activities within workload allocation models, strengthen such an ‘official story’ of academic practice as comprising fragmented, countable activities. The prominence of such workload models in our School of Education may help to explain Flora’s viewpoint.

Challenging the reality of official stories of academic practice, Malcolm and Zukas (2009) propose a more ‘messy’, felt reality of academic work, where elements overlap, merge, support and challenge one another. Olwen’s felt reality supports this position, viewing, as she does, research, teaching and practice as symbiotic scholarship activities, all underpinned by a values-based approach to her work within the academy. Declaring herself unwilling to write simply to satisfy an organisational agenda, she nevertheless seizes the chance to contribute to a publication which focuses on an area she is passionate about.

*It seemed to me that there was an expectation to write for the sake of it. I wasn’t going to do that – but when the chance came to write chapters for books on special needs I was keen to contribute and this helped me to develop my thinking and practice.*

(Olwen’s story: segment 10)

Olwen appears to have the professional courage necessary both to challenge organisational expectations and to embrace the wider aspects of academic practice which support her development as a practitioner. Other participants, however, lacked the confidence, at least initially, to embrace fully all aspects of their new professional role.

Tamara, for example, conceptualises research as an isolated process to be learned rather than a core element of holistic academic practice (McAlpine et al., 2011). Lacking confidence in her abilities here, she sees her expertise as interrupted, leading to a dip in her professional confidence. Notwithstanding the available support provided by the university, her development needs remain unfulfilled. Other

participants tell similar stories. Frederick, for example, finds he lacks the collegial support needed to underpin his developing identity as a researcher – ‘*I don’t have anybody else to talk about it with*’ (Frederick’s interview: segment 20). This lack of support not only curtails his potential productivity but also challenges his developing sense of professional self.

The impact of Tamara’s lack of focus on the research aspect of her role could be explained by an application of Nixon et al.’s (1998) belief in the necessity of pursuing all scholarship activities in tandem if academic practice is to flourish. From this perspective, her dissatisfaction with her professional persona may be explained by the negative impact which a failure to engage with one aspect of academic practice has on the other elements. Tamsin’s experience of a recent growth in her professional confidence supports this explanation, given that she attributes her developing self-assurance at least in part to a greater understanding of the interdependence of research and teaching.

An interesting picture of the conceptualisation of academic practice within the School of Education begins to take shape then. The separation of the practices of teaching, research and administration by some participants allows them to view these practices as essentially different not only in form and activity but also in terms of the practices’ relationship with the participants’ professional self. For others, this self seems to be defined by the symbiotic nature of the elements of academic practice. I turn now to an exploration of the meaning participants make of the particular practice of academic writing to and its link to their developing professional identity.

### **Making meaning of the practice of academic writing**

The practice of academic writing is seen by the majority of my participants as closely connected to research. The exact nature of this perceived connection varies. Some participants seem to conflate the activities of research and writing, using the term

research to indicate both a process of investigation and of the recording of the results of that investigation in written form, whilst others clearly differentiate between the two activities.

Participants hold divergent views on the purpose of academic writing. For many, writing, like research, is understood as a means to develop practice, often through sharing the results of practice-based research activity. In some cases, such as Olwen, the practice identified is the participants' own. Olwen values writing's capacity to enable her to develop her thinking through the process of getting a coherent story onto a page.

*Writing about practice helps me to understand it better, make it clearer, basically understand the reasons for doing it because ... like I'm writing this partnership paper at the moment and I still don't know about it but I am quite confident that I will be able to know the story by the time I have finished it.*

(Olwen's interview: segment 9)

More often, practice refers to the activity of a disembodied other, someone who is going to have direct contact with children in schools. Thus for Tamsin, the impact of research and writing is to improve the educational experience of children.

*Education is so much more than teaching and I'm going back to that understanding that this is what I want to be involved with because if we can unpick education, if we can find out what really works, we can make this better over here* (Note: points to Wordle picture in collage featuring practice development in schools).

(Tamsin's interview: segment 1)

Olwen's suggestion of the link between writing and thinking is confirmed by a number of other participants. Conceptualising writing as educative and supportive of complex processes of thinking and understanding (Creme & Lea, 2008), Sam, for example, ascribes great value to the writing process. He sees writing as informing both his thinking about his intellectual interests and his professional identity.

*Writing for research is definitely part of the process as well. In a weird way I suppose it is my main way of thinking around this (Note: points to representation of professional identity on collage) because I couldn't do the collage to start with, I had to start writing. So I think writing, scribbling, is definitely my main way of enquiring into what's going on and strangely enough I'm always attempting to write frameworks and structures to explain some key concepts that are in my head.*

(Sam's explanation of his collage: segment 34)

Sam extends the cognitive support functions of writing to his work with students.

*So I try to use the research I am doing in my thinking on teaching and working with students and on their research ... to give them ... to sort of model open enquiry, thoughtful enquiry to them.*

(Sam's explanation of his collage: segment 31)

Whilst acknowledging the key role which writing plays in thoughtful, open enquiry, Sam nevertheless also acknowledges its function as an instrument of measurement and classification (Foucault, 1977). The performative agenda behind the view of writing as outcome (Kottkamp, 1990) is referenced by other participants. Olwen draws attention to the 'writing as outcome' focus of those in leadership positions within the university.

*... because that's the argument that I had with the Pro-vice Chancellor because he couldn't understand why I was always talking about process ... but actually it is, it is all about the process of writing, it's not about the outcome.*

(Olwen's interview: segment 14)

A number of participants share this outcome-driven view. Producing publishable products is one way in which academics can secure a legitimate source of capital within the university (Archer, 2008). However, writing is often seen as a form of organisational measurement of worth (Kamler, 2008). For some participants, concerns about such measurement emanate from a lack of confidence in their capability to produce acceptable written products. The peer review process is used to test what has been written against the understandings of experts in a particular field, in order to determine its potential contribution to knowledge and, hence, its worth. Some

participants doubt their ability to reach this standard. Tamara, for example, is concerned over her lack of writing ability, and of a perceived lack of support for the development of her writing skills.

*.. We could write a paper for a conference... I don't really know what that means you know. It is something that is said but what I would like is to see one, have a template, to have .... You know ... some support with that. To just have that throwaway comment, oh yeh, we could write a paper for that, I don't really know what it means.*

(Tamara's interview: segment 11)

Her comment indicates that, despite being a member of the School of Education for 5 years, the process of writing still appears mysterious and outside of her professional acumen. Flora similarly sees herself as unable to find the self-confidence to initiate writing activity without support.

*I think because I've taught young children for so long and built up that, then along came (name of colleague) and said, have you ever read anything that you thought, I could have written that?' and the answer is yes, that all makes sense, yet why haven't I done it? So I need someone who's pushing me.*

(Flora's commentary on her collage: segment 40)

The reference to young children is interesting here. Flora's view of herself as an early years' teacher, and now a lecturer in early years, continues to have a profound impact on her view of her own potential. Frederick sees himself as not having the basic tools to write effectively.

*Yeah, yeah and it's from like very basic things, it's like having the tools or ... and for me actually I feel like I don't have the tools to be able to do it.*

(Frederick's explanation of his collage: segment 51)

In so doing, he, like Tamara, reduces writing to a series of technical skills to be mastered, a view adopted in much of the literature on writing development for academics (see, for example, Elbow & Belanoff, 2000; Lee & Boud, 2003; Moore, 2003; Murray & Moore, 2006; Bolton, 2010). Frederick acknowledges that in

actuality his concerns regarding writing may be due to a lack of confidence rather than a lack of skills, yet skills-based concerns remain relevant.

Other participants such as Sara and Tamsin see themselves as skilled writers. For Sara, the issue in terms of productivity is time – *‘it always falls to the bottom of my list’* (Sara’s explanation of her collage: segment 90). Tamsin’s relationship with writing appears to be more complex and is rooted in a values-based approach to academic practice. Writing gives academics the opportunity to produce the journal articles and book chapters which the university values, and thus to gain the cultural capital which such approval brings. However, this external validation is not something participants necessarily seek. Instead, many reference the need for a moral imperative to stimulate them to write, an acceptance of the validity of reflecting their personal values and commitments in their choice of focus and writing approach (Clark & Ivanic, 1997).

For many participants, such a moral imperative remains rooted in teaching and learning. As indicated above, Tamsin finds that she cannot let go of the key driver for her professional work, that is, to support the education of children in schools. Any written result of research activity needs to impact positively on children’s education if it is to have any value for her.

*Yes, I can’t let go of that (Note: points to representation of teaching on collage) so for me if I’m moving onto the doctorate there has to be some sense of what is it that is going on out there that is impacting in here.*

(Tamsin’s interview: segment 25)

Olwen is similarly only willing to write if she sees an authentic purpose in so doing. This does not imply a rejection of the function of writing as a medium for knowledge-creation however. Indeed, Olwen responds very positively to opportunities to present the results of authentic writing at conferences for example, where there is the opportunity for practitioner feedback and joint knowledge-building. Despite current positive shifts in the value attributed to the Mode 2 knowledge, sector influences such



as the Research Excellence Framework may still affect the type of knowledge some academics seek to produce if their goal is to gain institutional approval (Harley, 2002). For academics within a School of Education, seeking such approval may well lead to ideological conflicts.

Despite these tensions, writing is still held as a desirable activity by participants. Flora constructs the chapter she wrote for a book as the ‘*culmination*’ of her work within the university. The image of a book, representing this chapter, stands powerfully at the end of her collage. However, she is reticent in naming it in this way.

*So this is what’s coming now, so this is the chapter of the book, and I shouldn’t say it’s a culmination but for me actually it is.*

(Flora’s explanation of her collage: segment 46)

This reticence in appearing to privilege writing over teaching is illuminating. It seems to have its roots in a concern that others might see the activity of publication as a sole author as inappropriate, as indicating a self-serving, self-aggrandising attitude which teacher educators, as a community of practitioners, naturally reject (Roberts and Weston, 2013).

This is especially problematic in this particular School of Education, where research is not the norm and ‘researchers’ are seen as different, even being situated ‘*in their own room*’ (Frederick’s explanation of his collage: segment 60). For academics such as Flora then, writing for publication becomes a complex situated activity, undertaken in the context of a School culture in which the value of publication has yet to be fully accepted. To locate herself in the camp of those who ‘do’ rather than those who ‘write’ (Griffiths et al., 2010) would be a safer positioning but may well not allow for the professional development and impact on professional identity which writing can bring about.

## **Towards a discussion of emerging connections**

This chapter has focused on a thematic analysis of the data, with my first three research questions acting as an over-arching analytical framework. Evidence to illuminate my fourth research question has been threaded through my discussion of questions 1 - 3. This analysis has pointed towards a number of connections between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. In summary, many participants held strong pre-conceptions of the academic world they were about to enter, prior to taking up their posts. Some focused on the presumed primacy of teaching, others on the supposed centrality of research and writing. Whatever the expectation, it was commonly challenged by the actual experience of working in the university.

This challenge to preconceptions may well have contributed to the feeling of a lack of connection on entering the university, a sense of being out of alignment with the organisation or with colleagues. This disconnect caused a challenge to many participants' confidence in their sense of professional self. For some it also raised issues around the degree to which their professional value-system matched that of the university and of the School of Education, particularly in the area of research and writing for publication.

Many participants indicate that their substantive identity within the university remains linked to the teacher identity they had within school. Others see themselves as embracing an identity which includes the research and writing aspects of an academic's work. The importance of a clear values-base for the development of a professional identity is underlined by many participants, and is often associated with a sense of strain or challenge in fitting into a new organisational environment. There are varying understandings of this environment, particularly of the environment of the School of Education, with some seeing teaching as prized above all else whereas others see the research agenda as trumping teaching.

Despite these varying emphases, the value of research is recognised by all my participants. For some, this value arises from its capacity to enhance practice, whereas others prioritise its knowledge-production function. However, many participants do not succeed either in regularly undertaking research or in sharing its results through publication.

Academic writing is also seen by many to gain value through its potential to support practice development. Others see its purpose as being supportive of thoughtful, open enquiry. Its potential for individual classification, that is, to act as a measure for organisational judgements on individuals, is noted by many participants. Participants refer to their perceived inability to write well and their perception of the imperative to write to an organisational agenda. Many participants refer to the need for a moral imperative to stimulate them to write and to the need for a choice of writing focus which reflects their personal values.

Based on the thematic analysis of my data presented in this chapter, in Chapter 10 I revisit and critique my original conceptual framework in order to develop a more fruitful theoretical explanation of the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing.

## **Chapter 10**

### **A developing theory**

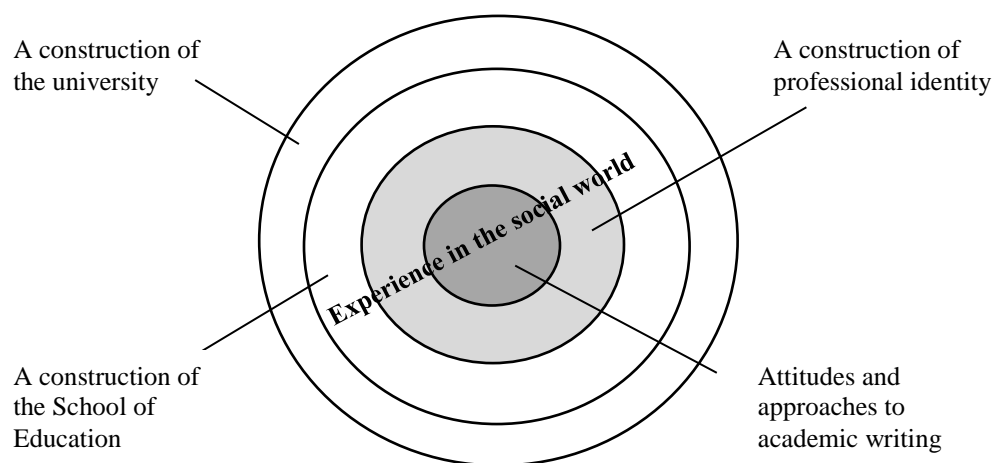
In Chapter 9 I presented a thematic analysis of the individual portraits developed to generate insights into seven colleagues' views of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. This thematic analysis allowed me to begin to test the sufficiency of my original conceptual framework. In the first part of this chapter I revisit, reflect on and critique this original conceptual framework. In the second part of the chapter I move on to explore how two elements missing from this conceptual framework - the concepts of authenticity and moral purpose - would strengthen an explanation of the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their approaches to academic writing. The chapter ends with the development of a new conceptual model based on this re-theorising and a summary of this study's contribution to knowledge.

### **A critique of my initial conceptual framework**

In Chapter 5 I presented a tentative theory, developed through a critique of relevant literature, around the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. This theory was supported by the development of a conceptual framework which provided me with a way of exploring my research problem through my empirical work. The process of analysis undertaken in Chapter 9 explored the explanatory value of this conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between academics' conceptions of professional identity and academic writing practice and for building a theory which illuminates this relationship.

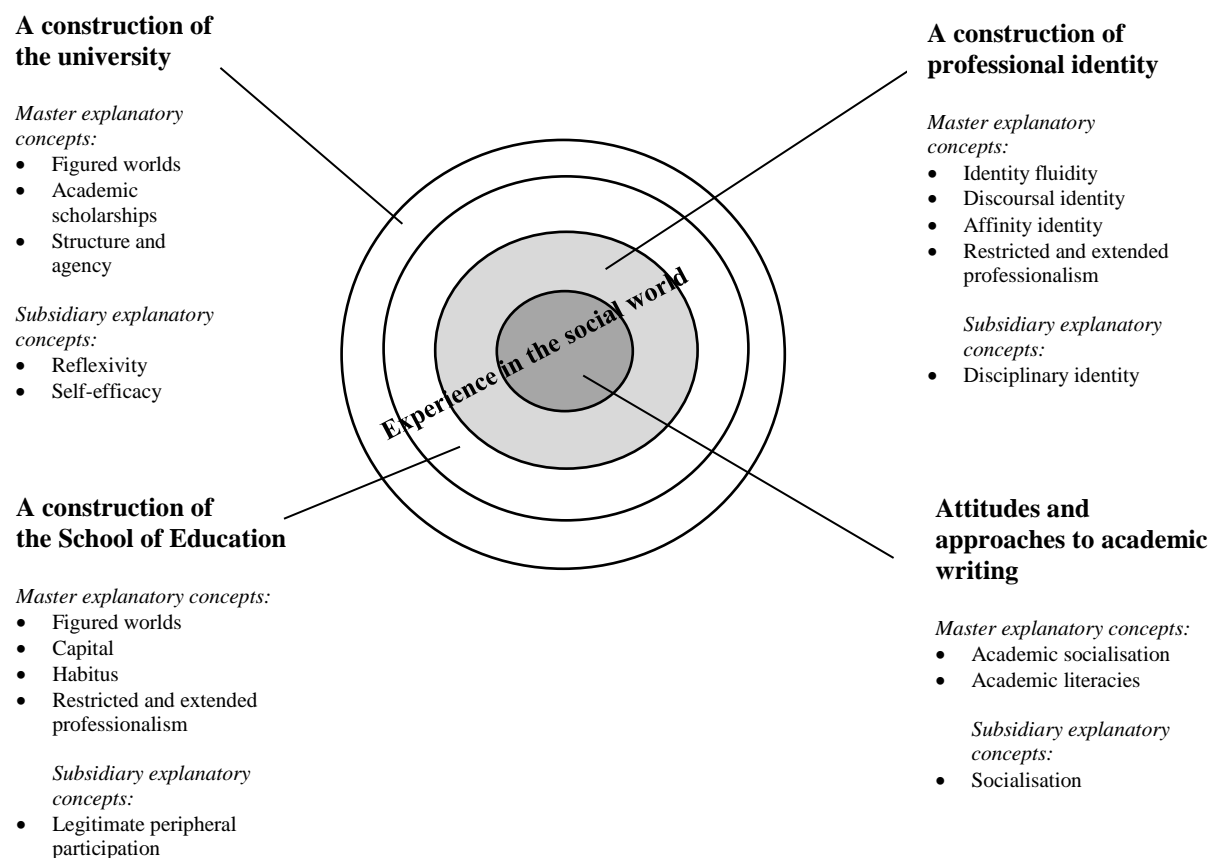
As discussed in Chapter 6, the type of theory I seek to develop in this study is not derived from the positivist tradition, articulating relationships between variables in order to identify causal relationships or to predict behaviour. Instead, I seek to develop an interpretive, inductive theory which emphasises understanding whilst accepting emergent, multiple realities (Charmaz, 2006). The objective of this theory then is to allow me to conceptualise the study's phenomenon in order to articulate my understanding in abstract terms and offer implications for action in Chapter 11. This critique of the initial conceptual framework enables me to build a better explanatory framework, based on my interpretation of data from my empirical work.

My original organising framework comprised a series of concentric circles, illustrated in Figure 10.1 below, suggesting a multi-dimensional, shifting relationship between the factors which influence academics' attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university.



**Figure 10.1** An organising framework, showing influencing factors on academics' attitudes and approaches to academic writing

This framework was then developed to include the proposal of master and subsidiary explanatory concepts (Hargreaves, 2001) which I used to support my developing understanding of my area of focus. These master and subsidiary concepts are shown in Figure 10.2 below.



**Figure 10.2** A conceptual framework showing master and subsidiary concepts relevant to an explanation of the relationship between academics' conception of their academic identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing

Working with this conceptual framework in the design and execution of my research has demonstrated its numerous inadequacies. Firstly, I noted when introducing my conceptual framework in Chapter 5 that concepts have explanatory value in more than

the one domain in which I have placed them. The artificiality of the division into separate domains became more apparent as my empirical work progressed however and proved a distraction rather than a support to my developing understanding. In addition, the reasoning for dividing concepts into master and subsidiary in terms of their explanatory capacity also now seems somewhat arbitrary. This division was based largely on a subjective, incomplete understanding of the concept's potential explanatory power. The legitimacy of this approach is therefore questionable. Lastly, the framework itself appears to be in essence a framework of concepts rather than a conceptual framework. In other words, the framework, although noting important concepts for this study, does not offer an explanation of the inter-connections between the concepts, nor of the relative strength of those relationships.

Despite the validity of this critique, this conceptual framework did provide a 'way of looking', giving a structure to my empirical work. Its insufficiencies as an explanatory framework are perhaps to be expected as this was not its only role. It was effective in summarising a complex web of potentially interacting factors which were then used to guide my research approach. Equally, it supported a process of rigorous and systematic analysis of data, as discussed in Chapter 7. However, this analysis and interpretation of this data has led me to an understanding of two key elements which were missing from this original framework, the concepts of authenticity and moral purpose. The explanatory significance of these concepts is explored in this chapter.

### **Authenticity as an explanatory concept**

The concept of authenticity did not feature in my original conceptual framework. However, it does appear to offer an important lens through which to interpret the stories offered by my participants. Explaining the concept of authenticity is challenging. In common parlance, authenticity is seen as becoming true to oneself (Cranton, 2001). This view stands in need of critique. Kreber (2013) offers a more

nuanced understanding of the concept by drawing on the three philosophical traditions which she believes underpin it. She notes that existentialist theories help us to understand authenticity as a process of becoming aware of the uniqueness of our lives and our capacity to both act and take responsibility for those actions. Critical theories suggest that authenticity is allowed only through the exercise of reflexivity which reveals our assumptions, our set ways of seeing and the power relations which hold normative practices in place. Communitarian theories point to the social context in which authenticity must occur if it is to be significant to the human condition. My understanding of authenticity in the context of this study is strengthened by drawing from all of these perspectives. Authenticity in respect of the professional identity of an academic, and in particular, in the act of writing, could be understood as the extent to which academics are aware that they are unique as a professional. From this position, they would understand both their own way of seeing and its flaws and use this self-awareness as a platform for action within their School and university. Their thoughts and actions would be motivated by this unique self and, following Bonnett (1978), would be authentic because of this. Thus authenticity appears to be both multi-dimensional in its essence and to have multi-level impact on activity.

In viewing authenticity as multi-dimensional, I am following Nixon (2004) in understanding it as a process rather than an end point. A study carried out by Burks and Robbins (2012) underlines this view of authenticity as ever-evolving, as does the illuminating literature review conducted by Kreber et al. (2007). This review, which focused particularly on conceptions of authenticity in teaching, was supplemented by and understood through interviews with academic staff. Kreber et al. (2007) offer a number of commonly-referenced characteristics of authenticity derived from a combination of their literature review and empirical data. Of particular relevance to my study are the characteristics of sincerity, truthfulness to self and 'honest scholarship'.

In terms of sincerity and truthfulness to self, the process of becoming authentic involves a developing awareness of our uniqueness as human beings, and of the



values and convictions which underpin this uniqueness (Vu & Dall'Alba, 2011, in Kreber, 2013). A view of identity as a work in progress argues for an understanding of 'uniqueness' as a similarly shifting phenomenon. Bonnett (1978) calls this developing authenticity. The concept of authenticity has clear ontological roots then. The link between authenticity and reflexivity is strong here. Through reflexive consideration of what we believe in, why we believe in it and how this belief is enacted in our day to day lives, we take responsibility for our actions and commit ourselves to challenging our beliefs and assumptions and acknowledging their impact on our professional persona and activity (Kreber, 2013). We are more likely to be genuine and open and evidence a clear link between values and action (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004).

Such a values-based understanding of authenticity leads to a particular interpretation of my data. The sense of professional inauthenticity evidenced by some of my participants could be seen to arise from a distancing of required professional activities from the individuals' core values base. Many of my participants were clear that they were not prepared to give of themselves to writing which they did not see as according with their values. The sense of moral purpose which they needed to stimulate writing was undermined for many by the perceived valuing of writing for a different purpose, that is, to fulfil organisational or career-based ends.

Barnett's (2007) concept of a university as a place for both academics and students to become themselves is useful here, pointing towards the link between academics' authenticity and that of their students, further explored by Kreber (2013). Many of my participants followed the trend reported in Gremmet and Neufeld's work (1994, in Kreber et al., 2007) for the grounding of teachers' values in a concern to do the best for students. This seems to suggest that those who view themselves as teachers within a university context may feel morally compelled to privilege teaching over other scholarship activities. This concept of moral purpose calls for further discussion before returning to the concept of authenticity in order to continue to explore its relationship with academic writing.

## **The concept of moral purpose**

The concept of moral purpose is important in this study as it appears to be a key driver for action for my participants. The analysis of my data seems to validate Bonnett's (1978) focus on the importance of self-critique in human judgement. Thus, through a reflexive process, one knows when an action is 'wrong' in terms of one's own value system, and knows the actions one should take to live out this value-system.

As discussed in Chapter 2, I use the term moral purpose in relation to practice in the Aristotelian sense, seeing moral purpose as a driver for practice based in ethical choice and a determination to effect improvement (MacIntyre, 1985). For some, the term practice is inadequate when connected to moral purpose. Instead they propose the concept of praxis as more obviously encompassing a concern with morality and the pursuit of justice.

When a person's action is praxis they are striving to do something right, ethical, proper, the best that could be done under these particular circumstances, a right and principled thing to do.

(Kemmis & Smith, 2008:9)

The praxis of teaching is viewed as entirely positive by my participants. Those academics coming from a previous role as a school teacher in particular invest teaching with a moral purpose which confirms its position as praxis and, as such, justly superior to research. Teaching appears to be part of them, part of their authentic professional self. Through teaching they feel they can be agential, in that they can shape students' thinking and, through them, the world. In this they claim the social purposes for higher education (McArthur, 2011), that is, the development of universities as spaces for human creativity, resulting in benefit not only to those attending university but to society as a whole.

The valuing of the practice of research is more varied however, with some participants positioning it as external to their value system. For these participants, the dominant discourse in the academy is experienced as predominantly Mode 1, grant-funded activity, seeking to create propositional knowledge. This is seen to have little connection with the moral purpose which drives other academic activities in the School of Education. Structural constraints are understood as limiting academics' ability to be authentic, instead demanding an allegiance to an organisationally-determined value system. However, the reaction to this pressure varies. Some individuals appear to resist the dominant discourse around what is of value, maintaining clarity around what is of value *to them*. This resistance appears to be founded in a questioning of what is of worth (Webb et al., 2002) and of who decides. Such a challenge to the dominant practices of the organisation allows these participants to find a way to engage in 'scholarship which matters' to them (Hughes et al., 2011). Others find this more challenging, however, and are less likely to undertake research and to write about what they discover. The challenge can be explained to some degree by the differing understandings around connections between the different scholarship activities evidenced in my research.

My participants have strongly divergent views over how they see the connections between scholarship activities. Some subscribe to the understanding offered by Nixon (2004) of the range of scholarship activities working in tandem to give a moral coherence to academic practice. Others dispute this, seeing these activities as essentially disconnected. These viewpoints are illuminating in two ways. Firstly, when scholarship activities are understood to form a coherent whole, the moral purpose of that whole appears to become more transparent to academics. The discussions on pages 190-192 of Chapter 9, for example, illustrate how a view of research, teaching and practice as symbiotic scholarship activities, underpinned by a values-based approach to professional identity, can alter the way in which individual activities are both understood and practiced. Activities which would be held as intrinsically less valuable gain value from their association with more esteemed activities. Secondly, and importantly for this study, there appears to be a link

between my participants' position on the moral purpose of an activity and their belief in their ability to perform effectively. Spillane's (2000) study of a fifth grade school teacher provides a compelling illustration of this link between a belief in the value and moral purpose of an activity and an individual's capacity to be successful in it. This strength of correlation is similarly indicated in my data.

This relationship between a conception of scholarship activities, moral purpose and professional effectiveness is important in this study. It suggests that the impetus needed to support the development of academics into productive writers may come not from institutional pressure and performative target-setting as part of an appraisal regime, but instead through stimulation of their moral purpose and encouraging them to speak freely and with authentic feeling (Badley, 2009). Institutional constraints to this freedom are to be expected, for example, in the form of institutional focuses for publication and the degree to which institutional policy and practice can be publically critiqued. More surprising is my participants' suggestion that their relationships with colleagues can also be a source of either liberation or restriction.

There is strong evidence in my data to suggest that colleagues have identity-shaping powers, with participants wishing to locate themselves as similar to some people and different from others. Some participants seem to hold their difference from the norm as a testament to their commitment to authenticity of self. Others are less sure of the basis of this authenticity and are still in the process of actively determining those they are like and those they are not. A discursal perspective on identity, where identity is defined not so much by the institution but by the relationship between actors within it (Gee, 2001), seems to hold here. This alignment or misalignment with others appears to have a strong values base. A sense of affinity with those who hold similar values in terms of academic scholarship activities appears common, as does a feeling of disassociation if this is not the case (see, for example, pages 201-203 of Chapter 9). This is an important discovery in a School in which academic writing is viewed by a considerable number of colleagues as outside of the norm. It raises the question of how authenticity can be experienced through the activity of academic writing.

## **Authenticity in academic writing**

Despite increasing organisational pressure to research and publish and an understanding of its validity as part of the academic role, publication remains on the edge of many participants' norms in terms of academic work. As in Brew's (2001b) study, my participants often refer to the difference between research and writing which has an external, organisation-led, product orientation and research and writing emanating from authentic, internally-based professional concerns. The discussion in Chapter 9 exemplifies this perceived dichotomy. Where writing is conceptualised as educative and supportive of thinking and understanding, considerable value is ascribed to it, as demonstrated on page 204. Here, it is situated as part of the moral imperative to support learning. Where it is seen as a response to the university publication imperative it is more easily rejected, being conceptualised as simply one of a long series of tasks to be achieved (see page 205, for example). The capital which could be accrued from the production of publishable products is not viewed as valid if these products do not originate from a personal set of values and linked moral purpose. Thus, as in Vannini's (2007) study, authenticity appears as an important motivating function for activity.

My participants clearly see writing as a social practice to be understood (Lea & Street, 1998) rather than wholly as a set of skills to be learned. They view writing as an activity which is used to make meaning, with text viewed as the result of a particular social process – an individual writing within a context – rather than an object which stands outside of the context of its production (Lillis & Scott, 2007). The possibilities for affective and ideological conflict implicit in this view of the writing process, raised by Lea and Street (1998), come into play for some of my participants as they seek to remain true both to personal and institutional imperatives.

For my participants, authenticity in academic writing appears to derive from its location in a figured world of the university as a platform for narratives, with the speaker acknowledged as having a legitimate story to tell. There are of course

tensions in this statement as the legitimacy of any story can be challenged, either by other individuals or by organisational counter-stories. However, an author's feeling of legitimacy, even if open to challenge, positions that author as in control of the writing process. Authors are empowered to share their own stories, defining their experience within a frame which makes sense to them and which has a legitimate purpose in a 'moment of authenticity' (Barnett, 2007:47). Such a stance can be dangerous of course. It can place an author outside of the norm, both of the university and of their colleagues. It can mean having to summon the courage to stand alone (Barnett, 2007) and the necessary sense of agency and capital to know that such aloneness will not be fatal but formative.

Some of my participants acknowledge the capacity of writing to place them in this less comfortable space. For them, the source of discomfort derives in part from the implication that, in giving time and energy to the writing process, they are differentiating themselves from their peers in terms of the relative value placed on self-centred rather than student-focused activity. For others it emanates from a sense of illegitimacy in the writing process. Here, their strength of belief either in the legitimacy of their story or their capacity to tell it, or even both, is inadequate to the task of producing a written product they would view as valuable.

The concept of authenticity has obvious potential to support an explanation of the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. However, a critique of this explanatory potential is also illuminating. In Chapter 3 I argue for identity as a work in progress, not a fixed state but a process of development. At any given point in time then, we are not so much someone as we are between being one kind of someone, on our way to being the next kind of someone. Authenticity, however, is often couched in terms such as being true to yourself, being natural, being rooted, language which, as (Badley, 2008) points out, suggests its immutability. However, in reality one's own true self is elusive. Moreover, the advisedness of always remaining professionally true to oneself is questionable. This critique has implications not just for the potential

authenticity of a person but also of their academic writing. This writing can be authentic only at a given point in time and then only in its representation of the author's temporal values and beliefs rather than a fixed truth. The apparent incompatibility of the determining of a static authenticity with the acknowledgement of a developing self leads Rorty (1999, in Badley, 2008) to counsel students to abandon a search for individual authenticity and instead focus on becoming part of a free community of inquiry, to find the authenticity of the group. Such counsel may equally apply to academics trying to determine an appropriately authentic approach to academic writing. The concept of collective self-efficacy is useful here (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), offering the possibility for teachers to gain confidence and self-belief by focusing on a common research theme.

Despite this challenge, authenticity continues to hold promise as an explanatory concept in considering influences on academic writing in this study. Such promise is dependent on the term being understood not as a quest for an immovable inner self but the efforts of academics to find subjects to explore in writing which resonate with their value position. Here, authenticity describes academics' intention to draw on this value position to critique the dominant structures of the university which militate against their sharing of genuine professional stories. It therefore remains a useful explanatory concept, despite its exclusion from my original conceptual framework. In the second part of this chapter I develop a new conceptual framework, termed a conceptual map, which allows me to offer an explanation of the connections between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. This explanation recognises the importance of both authenticity and moral purpose through being firmly grounded in the analysis and interpretation of my data.

## **A new conceptual map**

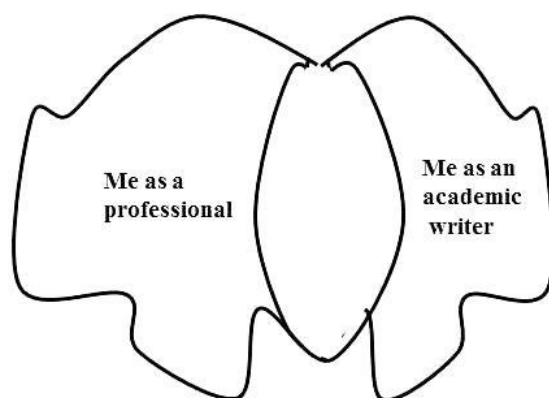
The study described in this thesis was designed to allow me to better understand the nature of the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university. This new framework allows me to summarise the theory which I offer in answer to that question. Following an approach suggested by Grant (2003) in her work on conceptualising supervisor-student relationships within the university, this framework has been designed as a conceptual map on which elements were placed sequentially in a layered approach. In this, it appropriately mirrors the development of participants' collages, where elements were added successively to the whole in order to produce a layered representation of participants' professional identity. Such an approach also allows for the thorough discussion of each element and a justification for its positioning, whilst referencing the impact of one element on another and the complex nature of the whole (Grant, 2003). This conceptual map presented below is, of course, a falsely simplistic, two-dimensional representation of a complex, three-dimensional reality. However, it serves the purpose of stimulating thinking and illustrating in summary the more complex thinking evidenced in the text.

Prior to beginning this research study, my experience as an academic in a School of Education in a post-1992 university led me to believe that academics vary in their capabilities, productivity and dispositions towards academic writing, despite the fact that they are all undertaking the job of university lecturer. The data I collected in this study confirmed this difference. A key explanation for this difference appears to be how individuals conceptualise their professional identity. The first layer of the conceptual map, shown as Figure 10.3 below, represents this connection.

The relationship between being a professional within a university School of Education and undertaking research and academic writing is to some degree institutionally mandated. The requirement for academics to be research active is now



increasingly underlined as an expectation of my university through institution-wide systems for capturing research activity and a change of tone in the discourse within the School around what it is to be an academic. However, this first layer of the map suggests not simply a relationship between an enacted work role – that of academic – and activity – that of writing for publication. Instead, it suggests that the connection is more deep-seated and personal.



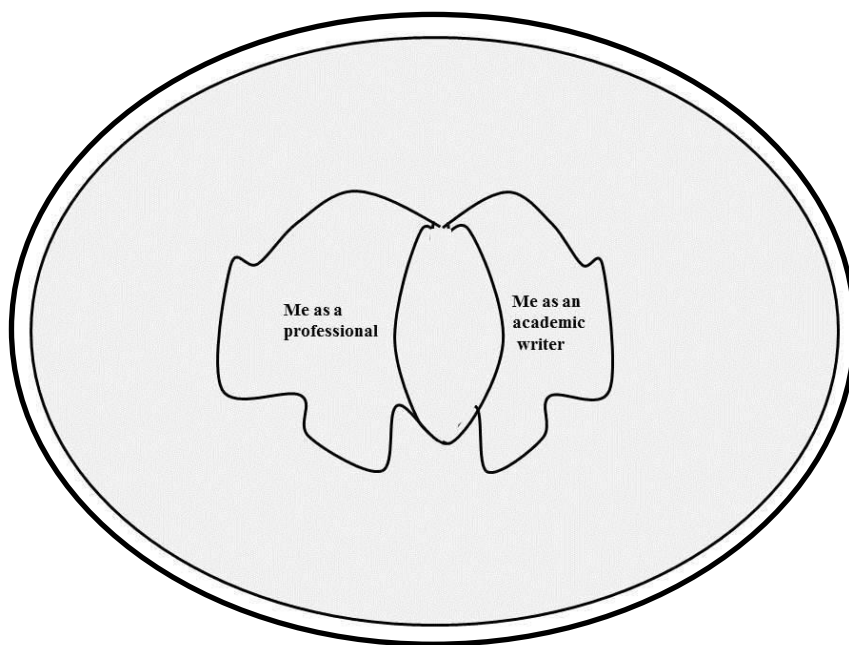
**Figure 10.3** The first layer: individual as professional and academic writer

The left hand shape in this first layer of my conceptual map represents an academic's professional identity, their self-view of 'Me as a professional'. This is not to suggest a view of identity as static. Instead, identity is presented here as a snapshot, a representation of one's view of one's professional identity at a given point in time. The irregular outlines of the shape are an attempt to suggest this identity fluidity (Jenkins, 1996), signalling the potential for shift and development.

The right hand shape represents the 'Me as an academic writer'. The shape mirrors that of 'Me as a professional' but is smaller, suggesting this aspect to be a part of 'Me as a professional' which co-exists alongside other parts. The choice of terminology in the label 'Me as an academic writer' signals a conceptualisation of writing not as a neutral activity but as a social practice which marks the writer out as a particular kind

of academic in their professional context. It indicates that this view of writing as social practice impacts on deep-seated understandings around professional identity and the self. If the whole of the map were to be viewed it would show other inter-connecting shapes, representing other facets of the professional self, such as ‘Me as teacher’ or ‘Me as administrator’. However, my particular interest is in the intersection between ‘Me as a professional’ and ‘Me as an academic writer’. All other intersecting shapes have therefore been removed from the map for the sake of clarity of focus.

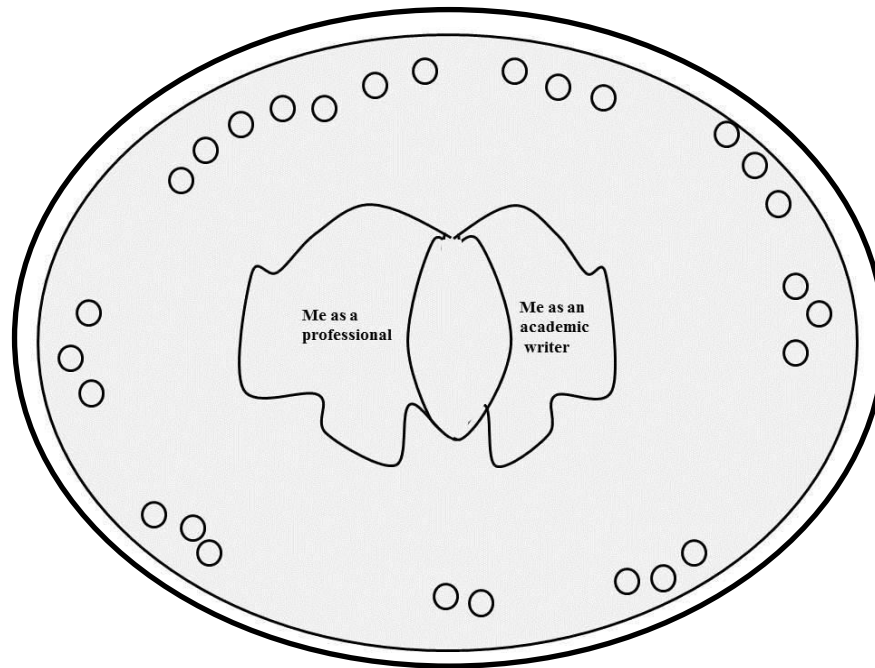
The development of a professional identity does not occur in a vacuum but in the context of a sector, an institution and a School. This context forms the second layer of the map, shown in Figure 10.4 below.



**Figure 10.4** The second layer: individual as professional and academic writer within a sector, institutional and School context

The sector is shown here as a white ring, surrounding the whole. The university itself is shown as a grey oval, surrounding and encompassing both the School and the individuals within it. The sector, university and School do not provide a benign backdrop for academic activity. Instead, all have their own goals and sources of power through which to pursue these goals and, indeed, to define individuals. The definition of an individual as research active or not, for example, can have a profound professional impact. In revisiting my collage-making and interview transcripts I detect these power structures at work. The university is therefore shown here as pervasive, influencing the essence of how we see ourselves within our work role and beyond. The context of the university in particular could be seen as representing structure (Giddens, 1984), an organisational arrangement which has an influence on the people within it. Structure is not inanimate however. It draws on people for its life force. Thus the university relies on the people who inhabit it to make manifest its values and imperatives.

The third layer of my conceptual map adds in the complicating factor of other individuals, who have their own ways of being as academics and writers. These individuals are represented as small circles, within the organisational structure and in some kind of relationship to the central individual, 'Me as professional'. The map cannot adequately represent the complexity of the impact of affinity with others or perceived difference to others which came through so strongly in my data. However, I have attempted to suggest the unpredictable, dynamic impact of this relationship on an individual's professional self-view by the random way in which these other individuals have been sited on the map, a haphazard pattern which signifies the likelihood of flux and shift.



**Figure 10.5** The third layer: individual as professional and academic writer within a sector, institutional and School context, acknowledging colleagues

It is important here to consider a possible influence on the strength of feeling around similarity and difference apparent in my data. The number of comments on relationships with others may not have been due to the importance of this concept but instead be a by-product of the arts-based methodology I used in order to elicit participants' stories. The act of making a collage, for example, of placing objects within a bounded space, could be seen to encourage the collage-maker to position themselves in relation to others within that space. The written story and interview offered no such enticements, however, yet many participants continued to explore their own position in relation to that of colleagues. Moreover, participants' western cultural context, with its emphasis on the individual, may well compensate at least in part for any suggestion of connectivity implied by the use of collage as a data collection tool.

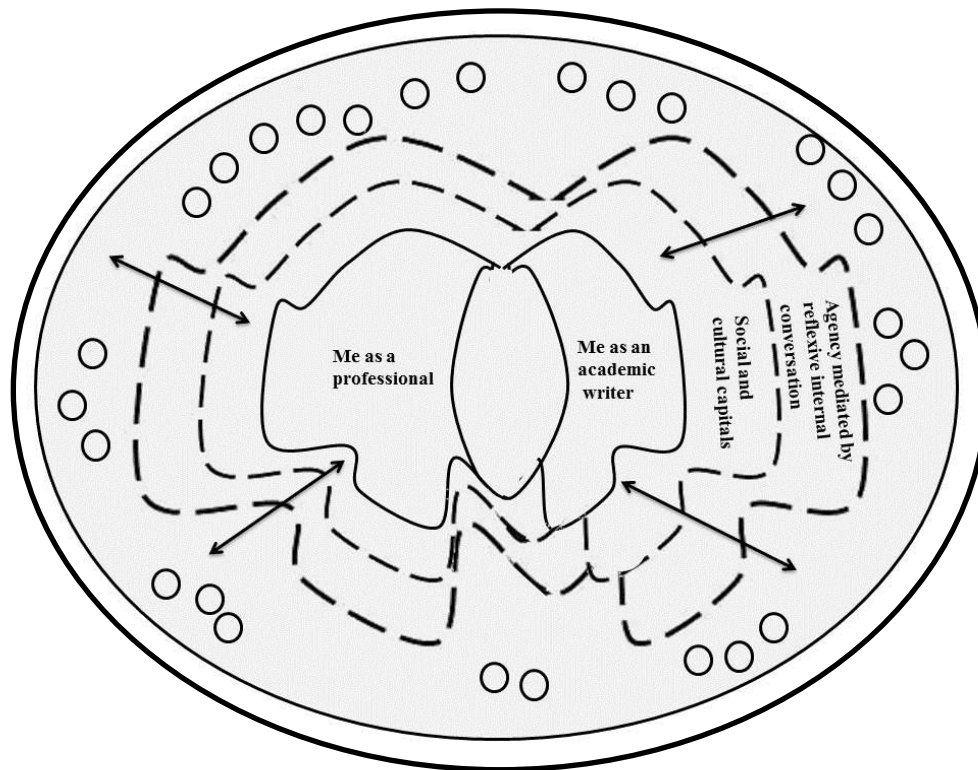
The fourth layer of the conceptual map references participants' belief in their ability to resist the identity-forming powers of the organisation and of colleagues within it

through an agential (Giddens, 1984) response to organisational demands. For some, agency appears to be exerted through the development of a previously-held ‘sub-identity’ (Swennen et al., 2010) of school teacher into a new sub-identity of university teacher. As in Boyd and Harris’s (2010) study, some participants appear to privilege this teacher identity over more research-based aspects of the academic role.

For others, agency is manifested through their response to the organisation’s attempt to define acceptable research and writing in a particular way. Rather than accepting this, through the power of self-knowledge, developed through internal conversations, (Archer, 2003), participants may be claiming their right to develop an alternative value-system around writing that matters to them, that is, writing which has an impact on practice and on student learning. In so doing, they draw on their social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997), developed through previous professional experiences, to find creative ways to contribute to knowledge-building.

The concepts of social and cultural capital, agency and reflexivity are added as a fourth layer to my conceptual map in Figure 10.6 below. Stores of social and cultural capital are shown as emanating from the individual, there to be drawn on and further developed by the individual as necessary in their professional context.

The inclusion of reflexivity as a key element in this conceptual map may be open to challenge. Many of my participants evidenced thoughtful self-evaluation, which often leads to predictions of action. This could be interpreted not as a way of being but as a discrete response to a situation which demanded a reflexive response, that of being a participant in a research project. There is, however, strong evidence in the stories told by participants of the impact of a reflexive approach on previous professional choices and on self-view.



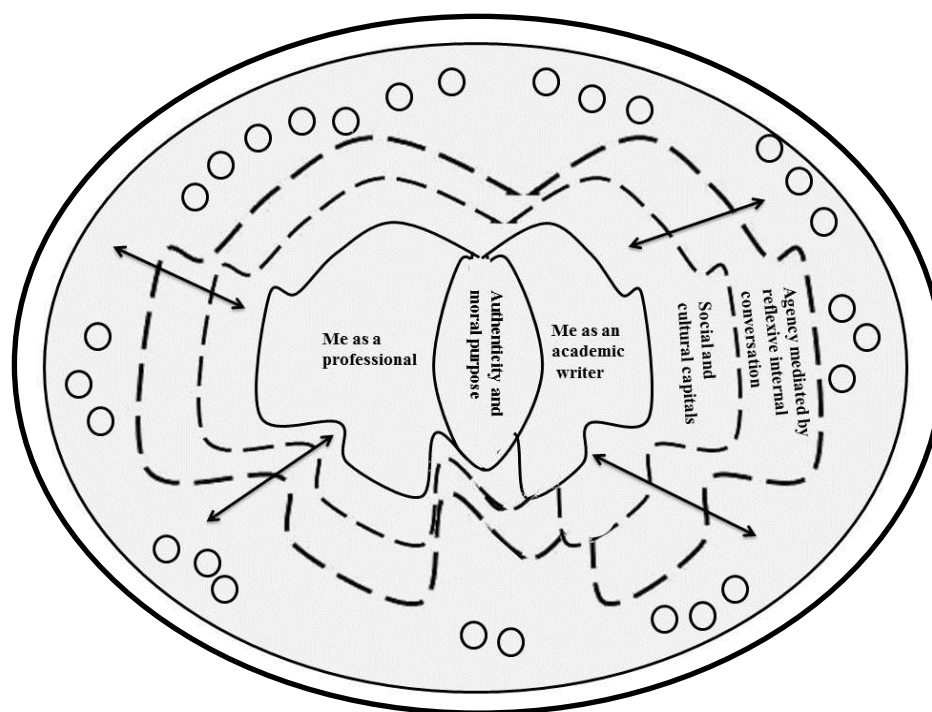
**Figure 10.6** The fourth layer: adding in the concepts of social and cultural capital, agency and reflexivity

Social and cultural capital, agency and reflexivity mirror the shape of the individual as a professional and academic writer here. They do not exist separately from the person but are gained or used by the individual. They are shown as broken lines, indicating their role not as an impenetrable shield against organisational demands but as permeable membranes through which influence can travel in both directions. This pattern of travel is indicated by the four double-headed arrows. Thus the organisational context can influence the professional identities of individuals and they in turn, by their actions, can influence the organisational context.

Having set up the positioning of the individual in an organisational context, the final layer of my conceptual map focuses on the influences on the intersection between 'Me as a professional' and 'Me as an academic writer'. The use of an intersection suggests there to be common elements which underpin participants' professionalism

and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. I suggest here that those common elements are best described by the concepts of authenticity and moral purpose. Challenging the organisational imperative for publication, my data suggest the development of an authentic approach to writing, underpinned by a clear moral purpose, as a key lever in the promotion of individuals' positive attitudes and approaches to academic writing.

From this values-based position, academics are able to challenge a hegemonic view of what constitutes worthwhile written outcomes and increase their sense of capital in this process of value re-assignment (Webb et al., 2002). They can assert the need to research and write because it allows them to support the development of classroom practice or to more effectively fulfil their moral imperative to support student achievement. They can be intellectual in an authentic way by pursuing their moral purpose as a practitioner, rather than writing articles which will be read by only a handful of academics (Winter & O'Donohue, 2012).



**Figure 10.7** The final layer: introducing the explanatory concepts of authenticity and moral purpose

This is the ‘scholarship that matters’ that Hughes et al. (2011) talk of. It is scholarship which allows people to develop their practice as a teacher and which is socially responsive (Learmonth et al., 2011). Here, research is seen as an element of a community service view of scholarship in which investigation and writing make a positive difference to people’s lives (Watermeyer, 2012). It is envisaged as part of the work of higher education institutions whose purpose is to benefit society and enable the enactment of social responsibility (McArthur, 2011). This satisfies Kreber et al.’s (2007) view that authenticity cannot be achieved in isolation but only in relation to something or someone. In this case, authenticity would be achieved in relation to students, academics and practitioners through the medium of a written piece which confidently, cogently and truthfully represented the author’s views. Such writing passes the test of having a moral purposefulness, imbued with practical import, which, following Nussbaum, Nixon (2006) suggests as the hallmark of professional practice.

For other academics, no such practice-based focus is needed however. For these participants, the issue seemed to be less focused on finding a worthwhile link between research, writing and practice and more about, following Bonnett’s (1978) argument, the imperative to find a way of writing which allows them a sense of personal autonomy and freedom. Their sense of authenticity comes from this belief in their freedom to develop their understanding of ideas which matter to them and to share these ideas in appropriate ways with others.

### **A summary of this study’s contribution to knowledge**

The main aim of my research was to explore the relationship between academics’ conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. I aimed to use my enhanced understanding of this connection to formulate proposals for the development of policy and practice which may support academics’ engagement in the activities of research and academic writing.



My main research question arising from these aims is, what is the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university? My study has enabled me to offer a well-grounded explanation of this relationship, in response to this question. In summary, academics in my School of Education vary in their capabilities, productivity and dispositions towards academic writing. I propose that a key explanation for this difference appears to be how individuals conceptualise their professional identity. Accepting identity as fluid and changing, I argue that academics' conceptualisation of 'Me as a professional' encompasses a view of themselves as 'Me as an academic writer'. This self-view is not developed in isolation but in the context of the university as an organisation, made up of both its rules and procedures and the academics who inhabit it. The individual academic's ability to be the professional they wish to be in this organisational context is linked to their stores of social and cultural capital and, through this, their capacity for agential thought and action, supported by reflexive activity.

The relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing can be understood through the concepts of authenticity and moral purpose. Drawing on their accumulated capital and their sense of agency, some academics are able to develop into the professionals they aspire to be. Their thoughts and actions are driven by moral purpose and by their unique self and are authentic because of this. For academics to engage purposefully in the activity of research and academic writing, they need to be driven by the same sense of authenticity and moral purpose. For my participants, authenticity in academic writing would be supported by the organisation's acceptance of the diversity of legitimate stories such writers have to tell. Academics in Schools of Education would then be empowered to explore and write about their experience within a frame which is meaningful to them and which has a legitimate purpose, as they see it.

This study goes some way towards revealing the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in the School of Education in which I work. In so doing, it provides an insight into how to support the development of academic writing in my particular School of Education, a key aim in our current strategic plan. In addition, it potentially adds to our tentative understanding about this relationship as it may be in other Schools of Education, in other universities. In so doing, it does not provide a portable 'answer' to a problem but instead, following Weiss (1980), supports the development of policy and practice through adding to the empirical evidence and ways of understanding this field. It suggests that considerations of identity, moral purpose and authenticity should be foregrounded in the discourse around academic writing and the promotion of publication. These are often marginalised by other issues in the complexity of the current HEI sector context. However, this study promotes identity, moral purpose and authenticity as central elements in an explanation of academics' attitudes and approaches to academic writing. In so doing, it offers new insights into the delimiting effect of current research discourse on academics' view of their professional identity. In Chapter 11 I move on to consider the nature of this study's implications for policy and practice.

## **Chapter 11**

### **Potential implications for policy and practice**

This thesis explores the relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. In this chapter, I use my renewed understanding to consider the potential implications of my research for policy and practice and to outline four tentative proposals for supporting academics' engagement in research and academic writing activities.

I do not seek here to develop a prescription or to offer a neat solution to a bounded problem. An important implication of this study is the need to move away from such limited ways of seeing. Instead, I offer a series of tentative proposals for change. The exploratory nature of these proposals is wholly appropriate, given the relatively limited data set on which this study is based. However, in making them I seek to confirm the potential of qualitative, small scale studies to challenge normative assumptions (Van Manen, 1990), to support the proposition of new ways of seeing, being and acting and to open up 'new territory for further research' (Patton, 2002:46).

As is usual with implications proffered for policy and practice, a tension exists between the ideal and the possible. It is tempting here to focus solely on a pragmatic response, to propose practical changes which are feasible in the current context of my university and School. Some such pragmatic proposals will be made. However, this study has also demonstrated the importance of imagining the ideal and this will also therefore be set out, as a stimulus to considering more fundamental change. Between these two polarities exists a middle ground, a third route which considers how individuals might act to change what appears to be fixed and immutable through an agential, authentic approach. This chapter also sets out this alternative, middle-ground approach.

The chapter is structured as follows. Four exploratory proposals for change are made. These are:

- to reconfigure our understanding, as academics, of the inter-relationship between scholarship activities
- to reconfigure the meaning of the concept of ‘research’
- to reconfigure the boundaries of excellent scholarship
- to support the development of professional identities which enable human flourishing

I use the term ‘human flourishing’ in the Aristotelian sense of ‘eudemonia’, (Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*, Book 1, vii). Here, human flourishing is considered as activity rather than state, a virtuous way of behaving which leads to a fulfilled and authentic life.

Each exploratory proposal is considered in a separate section below. Each section begins with a rationale for the proposal, derived from this study. It then outlines strategies which, I suggest, might support the realisation of the proposal. I begin by considering the first proposal, that is, a re-configuration of our understanding, as academics, of the inter-relationship between scholarship activities.

### **The inter-relationship between scholarship activities**

The rationale for proposing that consideration be given to re-configuring our understanding, as academics, of the inter-relationship between scholarship activities rests on the negative impact which current perceptions have on academics’ professional activity and self-view. The literature offers varying understandings of this relationship, as explored in Chapter 2. Some colleagues in my School of Education subscribe to the view offered by Nixon (2004) that a range of activities work together to give a moral coherence to academic practice. In this, they see

academic practice as potentially effecting improvement through concerted, ethical activity across the various scholarships (MacIntyre, 1985). Others see scholarship activities as essentially discrete. I am proposing that academics in my School of Education consider re-visiting their understanding of this relationship. In determining a rationale for this proposal, it is helpful to return to a key text.

In *Scholarship reconsidered*, Boyer (1990) considers what it means to be a scholar. He is particularly interested in the intellectual coherence of scholarship activities and in defining scholarship in ways which accommodate the complexities of the academy and the wider world. Boyer proposes a conceptual assimilation of the scholarships of discovery, integration, application and teaching as overlapping elements of academic work. However, it is his view of the relative prestige of these activities which is of principal interest here. Boyer contends that teaching, although historically highly valued as a vocation, has decreased in worth in the face of the growing respect for research activity. He deems research, termed ‘discovery’ in his work, to be ‘at the very heart of academic life, and advises that ‘the pursuit of knowledge must be assiduously cultivated and defended’ (1990:18). Other scholarships play a supporting role to this central academic activity. For example, referencing Aristotle, Boyer reminds us of a view of teaching as the highest form of understanding, an activity which can lead to the transformation as well as the transmission of knowledge. However, the teacher’s primary role remains to bring ‘the most honest and intelligible account of new knowledge to all who will try to learn’ (1990:24).

My data analysis indicates that the value of research is recognised by all my participants. For some, this value arises from their understanding of research as a method of supporting practice, whilst others prioritise its knowledge-production function. The potential of research to enhance personal or career development is also referenced. Some participants understand teaching to be of higher prestige than research, whilst others hold the opposite view. This difference in attribution of value is not easily correlated to differing conceptions of the purpose of research. The issue here is not which view prevails, but that a focus on the relative prestige of activities is

a distraction. Boyer's (1990) argument for the integration of scholarship activities is weakened by the implicit hierarchy evidenced in his discussion. My participants' capacity to become active researchers is similarly diminished by a value-driven debate. A focus in the School of Education on attempting to raise the status of one scholarship activity, arguably at the expense of another, could be counter-productive. However, giving attention to re-framing both research and teaching as one of a number of constructs which together comprise academic professionalism (Kreber, 2013) may support academics in re-claiming the research agenda and re-framing it to serve not only institutional but also personal, moral and social ends.

Having offered a rationale for proposing a re-configuration of academics' understanding of the relationship between scholarship activities, I now suggest a number of strategies which may support this proposal's enactment.

### *Strategies which may support the enactment of this proposal*

A series of strategies which may have the potential to support the reconfiguring of our understanding of the inter-relationship between scholarship activities is offered here. Strategies are indicated in italics and are followed by an explanation of the strategy and its potential impact. Strategies discussed in this section are: the development of a *School of Education Professional Learning Framework*; and an integration of organisational structures which support professional development.

#### *The development of a School of Education Professional Learning Framework*

Senior leaders in my School of Education might consider investigating pragmatic ways to support a School-wide understanding of the interconnected elements of academic practice. Drawing on Åkerlind's (2008) argument for the importance of influencing researcher affect, that is, academics' underlying feelings about research, the development of a *School of Education Professional Learning Framework* may be valuable in supporting a renewed understanding of the nature of academic practice and the interrelationship between academics' professional activities. The framework

could suggest that a moral coherence to academic practice might be achieved through such integration (Nixon, 2004).

Aligning such a professional learning framework with both the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in Higher Education (2011) and the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (2011) could accentuate the inter-dependence of teaching and research in the process of learning. The format and content of the framework might suggest parity of value of these activities, whilst underlining the impact of an integrated approach on effecting and sustaining professional effectiveness.

The framework equally may have potential as a valuable tool in the appraisal process. It could be used to offer academics a prompt for reflexivity in terms of ‘thoughtful, conscious self-awareness’ (Finlay, 2002:532) of their current position, a way to map where their professional activity currently lies and the degree to which personal and professional qualities match these activities. It could similarly act as a stimulus for professional dialogue around strengths, areas for development and career pathways. This more reflective audit of current professional expertise has the potential to strengthen requests for support and development as part of the appraisal process. Such a framework, and subsequent evaluation of its use and impact, may also be of some value to the wider university and sector.

#### *An integration of organisational structures which support professional development*

The university in which I work has devolved much of its strategic activity to Schools which operate as discrete business units. However, it retains at its centre administrative officers and services which support the professional development of academics. The Centre for Educational Development and the Doctoral College form two separate provisions to support such development, the former focusing on the development of learning and teaching and the latter, on research development. A Graduate School was established at the then Thames Valley University (now the University of West London) in 2005. Educational development was re-located to this

School to promote an understanding of the academic practices of research, teaching and development as integrated academic practice (Macfarlane & Hughes, 2009). Consideration of such a re-location at a structural level may prove an effective strategy to underline and develop the links between research and teaching at my university.

This juxta-positioning would have the potential to disrupt academics' tendency to identify primarily with one aspect of scholarship or another through a demonstration of the co-dependency of all scholarship activities in the development of an enquiring mind (Westergaard, 1991). Such a shift offers multi-faceted implications for both practice and personnel and as such may well be both unmanageable and ill-judged. However, some lesser form of linkage which points towards a closer relationship between teaching and research may be both appropriate and achievable. For example, my university currently holds two annual staff development conferences, one of which focuses on learning and teaching and the other, on research. Amalgamating these conferences would be a powerful signal of the inter-relationship between these two scholarship activities.

Both of these proposals are located in an approach which accepts the demands posed within the current structures - that is, that academics accede to the imperative to develop as academic writers - and offers supporting practices which will help academics to fulfil them. An alternative response would be to challenge the ideas and beliefs which sustain such value systems and structures. Such a challenge might begin with a willingness to re-consider, at individual, School, university and sector level, the complex meanings of the concept of 'research', as alluded to briefly above. I now turn to a proposal for considering the re-configuration of the meaning of this term.



## **Re-configuring the meaning of the concept of research**

The rationale for seeking to reconfigure the meaning of the concept of research within my university and perhaps beyond arises from the impact of the term, as currently understood, on professional self-view and writing productivity. Participants in my study are positive about undertaking research when it is conceptualised as open, thoughtful enquiry which has the potential both to influence practice and to satisfy personal goals (see Chapter 9). However, many do not see themselves as having either the capacity or interest to engage in the type of research which they believe to attract institutional and sector approval.

A genuine debate around the meaning of the concept of research could be difficult to achieve in the context of a sector and university research agenda which, as discussed in Chapter 1, appears dominated by the Research Excellence Framework (REF). This study has illuminated numerous issues raised by the workings of the REF, such as the impact on individuals of the gaming behaviour involved in deciding on institutional submission strategies (Otley, 2010). It has also raised the issue of the REF's potential for individual classification and for a binary division of individuals into those included and those excluded from REF validation, the 'haves' who mainly undertake research, and the 'have nots' whose main focus lies with teaching (Macfarlane, 2011:72-3). The delimiting effect of such classification on individuals' views of their professional identity has been explored in Chapter 3. However, a re-consideration of the trajectory of the HEI sector's journey through various systems for assessing the quality of research in its institutions, discussed in Chapter 1, can now be seen to highlight an important shift in emphasis.

The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), the predecessor to the REF, appeared to favour the production of Mode 1, traditional, scientific knowledge above Mode 2, dialogic, socially and application-oriented knowledge. This potentially de-valued the research of many academics. The decision to introduce a specific element for assessing the impact of research in the revised assessment system, the REF, indicates

a significant shift towards an acknowledgement of the value of Mode 2 knowledge. Counting for 20 per cent of REF assessment, impact case studies submitted by HEIs are judged on the social, economic or cultural impact of research or benefit beyond academia (HEFCE, 2011c). It has been argued that it is counterproductive to make funding conditional on social and economic benefits, given the unpredictability of which research will bring about the greatest impact in these areas (UCU, 2013). Despite these reservations, there are clear beginnings here of a sector re-evaluation of what counts as valuable research.

### ***Strategies which may support the enactment of this proposal***

Strategies which may support the re-framing of the meaning of the concept of research are offered in the following section. These are: a re-consideration of the breadth of my university's mission and purpose; and a re-framing of organisationally legitimate research and scholarship.

#### *A re-consideration of my university's mission and purpose*

As explored in Chapter 2, current shifts in the HEI sector are necessitating a re-consideration of institutions' mission and focus. My university's Strategic Plan for 2015-20 re-confirms our Vice-Chancellor's commitment to developing our research productivity. To support the realisation of this mission, senior leaders in the university seek ways to raise the university's position in the REF rankings. The most common kinds of impact nationally cited in case studies submitted to the 2013 REF related to informing government policy, parliamentary scrutiny, technology commercialisation, and print, media and publishing (Jump, 2015). Developing expertise in such engagement would sit well alongside my university's commitment to be both business-facing and internationally renowned.

The inclusion of impact as an assessment category could act as a catalyst for my university to consider its position as an organisation with an expertise in practice-based and high impact research, and to construct a story in its REF submissions for specific units of assessment around this success. An analysis of the data indicates

that academics in my School of Education are not highly motivated to write by calls to support organisational movement up league tables. The conceptualisation of research as an activity which supports income generation or organisational prestige does not readily chime with the motivations of those who see their role as supporting student development or social change. Instead, discussion has shown that academics believe in the need to develop personal agendas for their work, based on their particular principles and values as a scholar. Developing a specific focus on practice-based and high impact research may therefore support my university in gaining the research reputation its leaders seek.

*A re-framing of organisationally legitimate research and scholarship*

Such a re-consideration of the breadth of my university's mission and purpose may also stimulate a productive organisational debate around the currently accepted view of legitimate research and scholarship activity within the university. Suchman's (1995) work on organisational legitimacy is pertinent here. In order to re-consider what constitutes legitimate research and scholarship, the leaders of the organisation would need to consider the flaws in seeing a particular frame of reference as the only one which counts and contemplate embracing wider forms of scholarship as equally valid. This may well be challenging. However, McArthur's (2011) contention that there is room for different, authentic voices in the university is persuasive, given the arguments made in Chapter 2 for the democratising function of the university.

The potential for individual influence on organisational agendas referred to in the introduction to this chapter might also be usefully considered here. In this thesis I have argued that, although the organisational context can influence the professional identity of individuals, they, by their actions, can also influence the organisational context (see Chapter 10). I therefore reiterate here the need for academics, through representation on policy-making committees within the governance structures of the university, to consider attempting to shape the university's future ways of seeing and working. Such a challenge to the dominant practices of the organisation would allow academics to find a way to engage in the 'scholarship which matters' to them

(Hughes et al., 2011), discussed in Chapter 10, whilst also influencing what is of worth and who decides (Webb et al., 2002).

In the shorter-term, a number of pragmatic, strategic moves have the potential to bring about a re-configuring of the meaning of research in my School of Education, which may in turn support individual productivity. One such move may be to consider the development of a common understanding within the School of the meaning and value of practice-based research activity. This understanding could act as ballast for individuals striving to identify their particular research focus. It could acknowledge additional ways of conceptualising valuable research, for example, research as community service (Learmonth et al., 2011), research as economic and social activity and as a process of creativity (McArthur, 2011).

Despite the seductive neatness of this proposal and the catholic nature of the conceptualisation offered, it is probably neither realistic nor desirable to demand a common, School-wide view of such a complex activity. Indeed, to strive for such a common understanding would seem counter to a commitment to the development of authentic approaches to research which lies at the heart of this study. It may instead be more appropriate to adopt an inquiry-based approach to what we mean by research within the School of Education. Conceived as a whole-School, inclusive project, this could involve an investigation and validation of the various conceptions of research held by individuals and teams. It might also encompass a review of ways in which the development of these various research understandings and practices across the School are supported.

Such an approach emphasises that all members of the School have a valid voice in developing understandings through ongoing and open debate. This debate may also extend to a consideration of the degree to which excellence in scholarship can only be attained through the publication of research-based studies in peer reviewed journals or comparable publications. In the section which follows I give a rationale for my proposal to consider re-framing the boundaries of excellent scholarship.

## **Re-framing the boundaries of excellent scholarship**

In this section, I explore the rationale for considering the development of an alternative, inclusive, conceptualisation of excellent scholarship within the university. An investigation of the opposing view is, curiously, helpful in conveying this rationale. Rather than extending the boundaries of excellent scholarship, a different approach would be to curtail them, to follow the suggestion made by the think tank CentreForum and encourage universities to ‘specialise according to their strengths’, that is, to opt to focus on either teaching or research but not attempt to be expert in both (Wyness, 2011:6). The logic of this separation is initially appealing. However, in this thesis I argue that an academic activity cannot be artificially separated into different functions, some of which an individual chooses to pursue and others, to ignore. Instead, authenticity in the academic role relies on an integration of scholarship activities which offers a moral coherence to the professional identity of academics. The implication of this argument is that the higher education sector should consider following the more difficult road of finding new ways to acknowledge excellence across the full range of scholarship activities which take place within the academy. The section below offers strategies which may support such a re-framing.

### ***Strategies which may support the enactment of this proposal***

Strategies which may support the re-framing of the boundaries of excellent scholarship are explored below. These are: a re-analysis of the purposes of publication; and a valuing of excellence in teaching.

#### ***A re-analysis of the purposes of publication***

In the academy, the activity of publication has come to imply a narrowly-defined contribution to the current stock of formal knowledge. Such knowledge is accepted as principally held in articles published in journals, having passed through highly-regulated processes such as the peer review system. An analysis of my data suggests a sense of authenticity and moral purpose as a key driver for academics’ purposeful

engagement in their professional activities, and, in particular, in the activities of research and academic writing. A sense of authenticity for some academics is not best promoted through the writing of a journal article which does not have the impact they would wish for. Instead, in a more inclusive definition of excellence, scholarship activity could be judged through its positive impact on practice and knowledge-building via more popular avenues of communication such as blogs and video-based materials.

Despite the use of blogs in a wide variety of academic communities, Puschmann and Mahrt (2012) question their acceptance as a legitimate form of academic communication due to their inclusivity, that is, their ability to communicate more widely than peer reviewed articles which often speak best to those already within their discourse communities. However, the lively exchange of views facilitated by blogging recommends it as a communication mode and has the potential to change how we conceive the scholarship role (Farrell, 2005). In acts of communication and dissemination, academics have the right to share knowledge for the purpose of shaping practice, to advocate from a position of passion as well as a position shored up by research evidence. Such forms of communication may be welcomed by some academics in my School of Education as more in tune with the practice-based, collaborative work they seek to share.

The element of valued collaboration can extend to the roles academics play in the research and writing process, with the various activities required in researching, writing and publishing shared amongst a group of academics, who might consider working together as a collaborative team. The number of co-authored articles may suggest that this is already the norm. However, in my School of Education it can be argued that there is a lack of clarity over the nature of these possible roles. Building on Angervall and Gustafsson (2014), it may be useful to make more overt the variety of ways in which academics can positively contribute to research activity, taking leading or supporting roles, as fits their professional aspirations. The role of the

university in offering parity of esteem to these differing professional aspirations, in particular to the aspiration to develop as an excellent teacher, is considered below.

### *Valuing excellence in teaching*

In Chapter 2, I reflected on Westergaard's (1991) deconstruction of the processes of teaching and research into common scholarship attributes such as calculating, pondering, de-constructing and re-constructing, and on Nixon's (2004) understanding of the integration of scholarship activities as moral coherence. Such discussions of commonality might suggest the equal valuing within the university sector of teaching and research as scholarship activities. The analysis of my data supports this position, with teaching generally regarded as at least of equal value to research by my participants. The positioning of these two scholarship activities within the reward systems of the academy indicates a different view however.

Locke (2014), reporting for the Higher Education Academy on current trends in higher education, highlights research as the scholarship of choice for those seeking job security and career progression. Arguing for the valuing of excellence in teaching may appear a counter-productive strategy in terms of encouraging research and publication. However, the importance of validating the teacher identity which many academics in Schools of Education bring to the academy has been emphasised through my data analysis. Valuing and rewarding excellent teaching may well have the effect of raising academics' self-belief as legitimate members of the academic community and shore up their attempts to develop other, more challenging aspects of their academic role.

### **The development of professional identities which enable human flourishing**

The refinement of an understanding of academic scholarship through structural changes or tools such as a *School of Education Professional Learning Framework* could be useful in challenging academics to consider their practice across the range of

scholarship activities. Such a challenge is unhelpful, however, if it simply reinforces the view of ‘difference’ which arose as a significant issue in my data, where different levels of engagement across the scholarship activities were read as indicators of particular professional allegiances. Instead, it may be beneficial to encourage individuals to countenance what Vu and Dall’Alba (2011, in Kreber, 2013) term an ontological shift, which involves learning how to be authentic in all aspects of the academic role. I propose here then that the development of professional identities which enable human flourishing, that is, the living of a fulfilled and authentic life, need to be actively supported.

This proposal is both an ideal and difficult to achieve. The structures of the School of Education and the wider university can appear immovable. They can appear to dictate what it is to be an academic. Developing a new way of seeing and acting relies on the exercise of agency to support the growth of an authentic, professional self in the face of the ostensible dominance of organisational norms, values and practices. However, it is this feeling of being a part of shaping the world which is key to human flourishing (McArthur, 2011). An agential approach, based on a defence of individual values, can support individuals in achieving a challenge to organisational demands. The reflexive process has clear supportive potential here. Goffman (1959) conceptualises this process as drawing on a deeply-held belief in who we want to be, with actions judged by the degree to which they move us in the direction of this ideal self. The ideal self sits within organisational structures. Archer’s (2003) work, focusing on the impact of the reflexive process on the relations between individuals and such structures, extends the potential of this process. For academics within the School of Education then, reflexivity offers support for the challenge to organisational demands which authenticity may pose. This is Starr’s (2008) authenticity in action, a process of self-discovery, in which personal potential is realised and acted upon.

The type of authenticity discussed above is not easily acquired and requires institutional support of a particular kind. Manathunga’s (2006) critique of the colonial approach to academic development is relevant here. Such an approach



would see the School of Education adopting structural drivers for normalisation and professional control, such as making publication a prerequisite for securing tenure. This is unlikely to be supportive of the complex personal and professional journey implied in learning to be authentic in all aspects of the academic role. Instead I offer the suggestion that senior leaders within the School consider strategies that might be adopted to support academics in developing authentic, unique identities.

### *Strategies which may support the enactment of this proposal*

Strategies which may support the agential development of authentic professional identities which in turn enable human flourishing are offered here. These are: the development of a comprehensive induction programme; a commitment to grow the School as a community of researchers and writers; and the provision of space for thinking and writing.

### *The development of a comprehensive induction programme*

An analysis of my data demonstrates the strength of conceptions around identity which individual academics bring to their new role in the School of Education. These pre-conceptions vary in nature but were invariably challenged by the reality of working in higher education. In many cases, this variance between expectation and reality led to feelings of uncertainty and a loss of professional confidence. The exception to this was Flora, who benefitted from a targeted induction programme which introduced her to each aspect of the work of an academic, including writing for publication. I am not suggesting here that an induction programme might radically alter publication rates within the School of Education. However, it is clear that the feelings of de-professionalisation and loss reported by my participants are not supportive of the positive attitudes and approaches needed to face new elements of a professional role, such as academic writing. It may be productive for the School of Education leaders to consider the development of an induction programme which minimises the trauma of a career move and seeks to provide some of the building blocks for the development of individuals' understanding of, and practice in, a wider scholarship role.

*A commitment to grow the School as a community of researchers and writers*

An analysis of my data indicates that academics' ability to continue to develop into the professionals they wish to be within the organisational context is linked to stores of social and cultural capital and, through this, individuals' capacity for agential thought and action. The phrase 'wish to be' is carefully chosen here to indicate the importance of a sense of moral purpose in professional development, so strongly indicated in the thematic analysis of my data. The development of a *School of Education Professional Learning Framework* proposed above has the potential to offer one way of developing individual capital and agency in this professional development journey through reflection, discussion and planned activity. Coleman's (1988) examination of the effect of social capital within communities offers another way forward.

Coleman (1988) proposes that social capital can be understood not as the property of an individual but as a resource to be used by a whole community. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) study of teacher self-efficacy similarly suggests that the development of collective self-efficacy can positively impact on group motivation and achievement. There are implications here for the School of Education in which I work. A focus on the development of individuals could be usefully supplemented by a commitment to grow the whole of the School as a community of researchers and writers who together develop a shared belief in their efficacy as knowledge-developers and practice-enhancers.

This may necessitate the review of the current pattern of research leadership used to support this growth. Following Leithwood and Riehl (2003), I am using the term 'leadership' to signify two key functions, providing direction and exercising influence, whilst also acknowledging the emphasis placed in Yukl's (2013) classic text on the importance of a recognition of emotions and values in transformational leadership activity. Such recognition leads to the creation of conditions which will help individuals set their own direction of travel rather than simply following the dictates of others. My School of Education has a strategic focus on the development of a distributed model of leadership, enabling more academics to take leadership

responsibility by focusing on leadership practice rather than role (Spillane, 2006). The development of the School as a community of researchers and writers is an opportunity to enact this distributed leadership agenda, with individuals or small teams of academics setting the direction for their research and writing projects and their roles within them. The role of the research leader could then be transformed from one of giving direction to one of creating the conditions within which individuals and teams can be supported in setting the direction for themselves.

The question raised in Chapter 10 of how authenticity can be experienced through the activity of academic writing would perhaps begin to be answered here. The School of Education appears to have the potential to become a platform for individual and collective authentic research narratives. As such it could become an example of Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice, enabling members to become full participants in the research and academic writing aspect of their scholarship role through empowering them to narrate aspects of their experience which are meaningful to them, be that through articles for peer reviewed journals or in another form. The question of the value afforded to different forms of research output is again raised here. School of Education leaders may need to consider whether they subscribe to the view that all forms of writing are of equal value as research output or to acknowledge their difference but see each as playing a vital role in the development and sharing of knowledge.

#### *The provision of space for thinking and writing*

In practical terms, academics need to find the time and space to become members of a research and writing community and to develop the full range of scholarship aspects of their role. Many of my research participants referred to the difficulties of so doing. For many, writing, and even thinking, was confined to holiday periods or the late summer when the rush of teaching, meetings and email traffic subsides. Such a division of the academic role into a time for doing and a time for thinking appears unsustainable. Instead, I would argue that leaders of the School of Education might consider how to promote an integrated approach to doing and thinking, in which

reflection and writing become part of normal monthly activity and are recognised as an integral part of effective teaching.

The impact of physical spaces on the intellectual productivity of academics should also not be underestimated, particularly in terms of writing. Evidence of the widespread impact of writing retreats on academics' writing productivity was explored in Chapter 1. The writing retreat I led with a colleague was similarly effective in terms of stimulating writing activity. However, academics need to find more regularly-available spaces both to write and to engage in dialogue which supports the writing process. My suggestion that a room currently used as a workspace in the School of Education is reconfigured as a thinking, writing and development space has been accepted. This is not to suggest that all thinking and writing will be done in this space, or that the re-designated use of a workspace solves the complex issues surfaced in this thesis. Instead, this move represents just one prong of a wider initiative to map the patterns of social interaction, the quality of networks and the collaboration which supports academic development within the School. However, the symbolic relevance of the allocation of a physical space in which to think, plan and write remains significant.

Savin-Baden's (2008) construction of such spaces as not only physical but also mental and metaphorical is useful here. Learning spaces are constructed as opportunities to reflect on and critique your own 'learning position' (Savin-Baden et al., 2008:221) in the face of institutional challenges. Such critique is found to support the adoption of a stance, an authentic learning position from which to plan and evaluate activity, including the activity of writing. Learning spaces such as these are enabled only when they are institutionally valued however. Otherwise, they are seen as an irrelevance and poor use of time. The development of the School of Education as a community of thinkers and writers would do much to legitimise the development of such learning spaces.

It should be acknowledged that the development of spaces, both mental and physical, can be the source of additional expectations as well as affordances. In responding to the need to assimilate thinking and writing into academics' general activity, leaders of the School of Education may need to consider ways in which writing can be seen as supportive of academics' development of an authentic identity, rather than as simply another job to be done. The valuing of writing which arises from day to day academic activity such as teaching, together with a rising acceptance of different forms of the written word as legitimate scholarship, may comprise a pragmatic step forward in securing such a change of view.

### **A summary**

In this chapter I have explored the potential implications for policy and practice of the connection, as I now understand it, between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing. I have made four tentative proposals for change, namely: to reconfigure our understanding, as academics, of the inter-relationship between scholarship activities; to reconfigure the meaning of the concept of research; to reconfigure the boundaries of excellent scholarship; and to support the development of professional identities which enable human flourishing. I have explored strategies which may support the enactment of these four proposals at a pragmatic, ideal and middle ground level. The strategies offered have implications for academics within, and leaders of, my School of Education, leaders of my university, and those with influence in the wider higher education sector. I here summarise the potential implications for each of these stakeholders.

### ***Potential implications for the higher education sector***

This study provides some interesting insights, which could be used to provoke renewed thinking in the higher education sector around what counts as valuable research and the way in which such research might be shared. This invites reflection

on the type of knowledge which is accepted as legitimate and on what counts as a respected means of publication. It also points towards the development of an enhanced understanding of the purposes of publication, dissemination and communication. My study indicated a need to re-evaluate the activity of teaching, and to re-assess the weakness in privileging a particular frame of reference in terms of the relative valuing of individual scholarship activities.

***Potential implications for leaders of my university***

A consideration of conceptualisations of research at organisational level may also be beneficial. The debating of the position of research as one of a suite of scholarship activities may lead to more effective support and encouragement of academics who currently experience the world of research and writing as exclusive. At a structural level, such activities as a joint research and learning and teaching conference and the relocation of the university centre for educational development within the Doctoral College could effectively underline the inter-connected nature of all aspects of academic work.

***Potential implications for leaders of my School of Education***

Leaders in my School of Education may wish to consider both symbolic and pragmatic ways to support a developing understanding of the interconnected elements of academic practice and academics' increasing confidence in all aspects of their role. The initiation of an inquiry-based approach into to what we mean by research within the School could act as a useful catalyst for the development of such understandings. The development of a *School of Education Professional Learning Framework* and the allocation of a physical space within the School to facilitate thinking and writing might also be helpful pragmatic steps towards shifting understanding and practice in respect of research and writing activity.

A commitment to the development of the School as a community of researchers and writers which values authentic narratives of experience has the potential to enable individual academics to become more actively engaged in the research and writing

aspects of their academic role. It may be appropriate to re-think research leadership within the School, to focus on nurturing individuals' professional development in these areas through a revised induction programme and the fostering of research collaborations.

***Potential implications for individual academics***

Individual academics could consider developing a personal agenda for their work, based on their principles and values as a scholar. This has the potential to allow them to develop a sense of authenticity in all aspects of their academic role. Although challenging in the context of the seeming dominance of organisational norms, values and practices, academics might also wish to consider the adoption of an agential approach to challenging organisational demands and shaping their own identity as a scholar.

In Chapter 12, the final chapter in the thesis, I focus on the ways in which I, as novice researcher, academic and developing writer, have influenced this study. I also consider the implications of this study for the development of my own professional identity and my writing activity.

## **Chapter 12**

### **Final reflections**

This thesis begins with an exploration of my interest in the connection between academic writing and identity. At the outset, I resolved to adopt a reflexive approach to my research and to the writing of an account of it in this thesis. Such an approach enables others to judge the robustness of the data, the validity of the interpretation and analysis, and the claims I subsequently make. The strengths and limitations of my research have been discussed as appropriate in the chapters which account for each stage of the process. However, this chapter offers me the opportunity to reflect further on the impact of my biography and perspective on the research process and findings. As discussed in Chapter 1, I am an insider in this research, a member of the community of academics I am studying, although my situation as a published author also positions me outside of the experience of some of my participants. This research has allowed me to explore my own professional identity as well as that of my participants and to develop myself as a researcher. This chapter offers me the opportunity to reflect on this personal learning.

In Chapter 1 I posed three reflexive questions relating to the research process: What is my emotional investment in the question? How does this investment affect what I am finding? How does it affect my interpretation of what I am finding? In so doing, I was acknowledging my commitment, following Wright Mills (1978), to use my life experience to support this study and, by implication, the need to reflect on the impact of such an approach. Having concluded this study, I now also wish to consider the impact which my assumptions, intentions, research approach, research skills and preferences as a researcher may have had on what I discovered and the sense I made of it. I conclude with a consideration of the impact of this research on my position regarding academic writing and on my own professional identity.



## **An emotional investment**

My emotional investment in this study is best illustrated through reflection on the narratives which I produced as part of an exploration of my own identity as an academic. I wrote the story of my own professional journey and made a collage showing how I saw my professional identity at a particular moment in time, when I was collecting data from my participants. A colleague then interviewed me. I transcribed my own data and asked the colleague to produce my portrait for me. My original intention in so doing was to experience the process in which I was asking participants to engage. However, of equal value was the light this exercise shone on my positioning in relation to the research.

I had imagined that my interest in identity arose from my professional discomfiture at joining a university and my attempt to ‘write myself into the academy’, as discussed in Chapter 1. However, my portrait reminded me that I had used writing to ground my identity on a previous occasion.

*She was invited by the University of Cambridge to write about her experience of being a headteacher in a school that closed. She believed it was important to record her experience and found it valuable in helping her to make sense of it.*

(Extract from Amanda’s portrait)

The writing referred to here was my first journal article (Roberts, 2005). As described in the extract above, I found writing a very helpful way to assimilate a complex and emotionally challenging situation, the closure of the school in which I was the headteacher. The act of publication was important to me in that I saw it as a validation of my understanding of the experience. It allowed me to move confidently towards a new professional role. I wonder now if my initial enthusiasm to support colleagues’ writing was born of the positive impact of this first venture into writing for publication and the wish to re-create the feelings of value I had experienced, both for my colleagues and myself. This is particularly likely, given my complex response to a new professional context.

My portrait captures the lack of focus I felt in my role in the School of Education at the time of making my collage. The shiny ribbons on the right of the collage, shown in Figure 12.1, symbolise aspects of my role which I found interesting, such as leading the MSc in Practice-based Research and being involved in an international research project. However, the whirly, cream ribbon which dominates the collage symbolises '*aspects of her role which spiral down into nothingness*' (Extract from Amanda's portrait).



**Figure 12.1** Image 1 from Amanda's collage

I felt that much of my activity within the School of Education at this time was somewhat meaningless. It neither drew on my previous knowledge, skills and understanding nor challenged me to extend them in ways which felt valuable. Instead, I spent a great deal of time undertaking administrative activities which made little sense to me and which did not appear to positively influence either programmes or the students who participated in them. I too felt the sense of loss referred to by many of my research participants. This loss seemed to arise from a lack of substance in my role, as if my previous professional self had been dissipated. My belief that I had more to offer is suggested by the blank spaces in my collage, as yet empty of meaningful activity.

The potential influence of my own situation on the analysis and interpretation of data is significant then. In Chapter 1, I acknowledged the complexity of my position as a researcher and as a member of the community I researched. I sought to take account of this as I investigated the literature, collected and analysed data and came to conclusions about what they demonstrated. However, it remains likely that my own story has influenced how I have interpreted others' stories.

In Chapter 10 I explored my conclusion that, for academics to engage purposefully in the activity of research and academic writing, they need to be driven by a sense of authenticity and moral purpose. The warrant for this conclusion appears substantial in my data. I analysed and interpreted this data with rigour, following a set of practices, set out in Chapter 7, designed to ensure reader confidence. However, this conclusion could be influenced by my own pre-occupation with finding a place within the university which felt authentic and purposeful to me. My own discomfiture on entering the university may have shaped the way in which I looked at the situation of others and may have driven the research agenda in a direction which fulfilled my own needs. Equally, as someone with a particular interest in research in a School where teaching is highly valued, I could also have been looking to defend my own attribution of value to different aspects of the academic role.

The particular systems I adopted for authenticating my interpretation of my data, such as asking participants to comment on the draft portraits, goes some way towards ensuring that the stories I have crafted remain the participants' stories and not simply projections of my own. However, surfacing my emotional investment in the areas investigated in this study provides another mechanism for questioning, and thus moving towards assuring, the reliability of my approach. An exploration of the assumptions I brought to the study is similarly useful in qualifying the research outcomes and putting them into a proper perspective.

### **The assumptions I brought to this study**

In reflecting on both my research process and what I learned, I am troubled by Brookfield's (2012) powerful argument for the difficulty of surfacing the deeply-set, paradigmatic assumptions which frame the whole way we look at the world. I am recognising this difficulty in myself as I attempt to consider the assumptions I brought to this study and am concerned that this means that many assumptions will remain unchallenged. However, I attempt here to investigate the impact of those I can uncover.

My research was framed by the assumption that academic writing and publication, despite their complexities, are positive aspects of an academic's role which are to be aspired to, encouraged and facilitated. I held the belief that contributing to the building of knowledge through writing and publication is part of the moral responsibility of a university academic. This belief itself rested on certain assumptions around the nature of professional practice. For me, the hallmarks of professional practice included having substantial autonomy, although I saw this as increasingly challenged by the strength of organisational structures and demands within the university sector. All of these assumptions have been challenged through this research study.

This study compelled me to reassess the relationship between the weight of expectations built into organisational structures and individual agency. I have learned that negotiating the tension between institutional demands and individuals' need to act in accordance with a developing, authentic professional identity can support a sense of human flourishing.

I made a related assumption about the superiority of the written word as a mode of communication. This is interesting, given my commitment to the value of arts-based research methodologies and my stated belief in their ability to convey meaning where words fail. Despite this commitment, I asked participants to write

their story for me. This appeared logical for my research study and my defence of it in Chapter 6 remains, on reflection, sound. This logic notwithstanding, it may be that an alternative approach would have elicited different responses from my participants.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the tendency of teacher educators to continue to highlight the teaching aspect of their identity. Given this, I might have expected academics with a teaching background to imagine themselves operating in a predominantly oral mode of knowledge-creation. Moreover, there is strong evidence in my data that many academics in my School of Education seek a sense of authenticity and moral purpose in all aspects of their professional work. I assumed that, despite the imperative to write for organisational purposes such as the REF, the pursuit of authenticity and moral purpose could nevertheless be discernible in writing and publication. However, the data suggest that this is not necessarily the case.

Many of my participants do not experience authenticity and fulfilment of moral purpose in the activity of academic writing. Given this, I might have concluded that they would be best to avoid this activity and focus instead, as far as is possible within organisational constraints, on those aspects of their role which did fulfil them in this way. I did not come to this conclusion however, but sought in Chapter 11 to find ways to support the development of writing, and hence publication, opportunities. My decision could be interpreted as a re-assertion of a belief in structural dominance and an attempt to support academics in the inevitable endeavour needed to satisfy organisational needs. Conversely, it could be seen to evidence support for the producer interest, to assert the rights of academics to engage in authentic writing rather than in the production of particular types of article designed to satisfy the demands of the REF. I believe myself to have been guided by the latter imperative, but nevertheless the robustness of the conclusions of this study should be judged with this acknowledgement of the complex impact of my researcher assumptions and unconscious intent in mind.

### **The impact of the research on me**

Finally, I reflect on the impact of the research on me. The research process has been challenging in many respects. I came to this research as a published author. In some senses, this gave me a sense of superiority in a sector in which publication is highly valued. I believed I could use the research process to influence others to publish. I tended not to question the rationale for such publication nor my own motives in wishing to take on such a mentoring role. The research has caused me to question the many assumptions I brought to the study, including an unthinking acceptance of the value of publication.

Through the research process I have learned new skills and developed new understandings, both about the activity of research, and about the areas which make up the focus of my study. I have become a more critical and productive writer and feel that I can now engage legitimately in the discourse in my field and make a contribution to it. My learning from this research has not changed my drive to support the development of others, although it has caused me to question the origin of that impetus. My new understanding of the relationship between academics' conceptions of their identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a post-1992 university has led me to move away from my commitment to the provision of support for writing development. Indeed, the research has opened up the possibility for me of an advocacy role, challenging the current system-wide research and publication discourse. I am now focusing on the production of tools and systems which support professional development, in particular, a developing understanding of how academics might fully engage with all aspects of academic activity. I hope to use these tools to support the creation of conditions in which an authentic approach to research and writing can flourish.

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## Appendix 1

### Step 1: Recruitment email

#### 1: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

**Subject heading:** Opportunity to participate in a research study within the School of Education

**Title of study:** The relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university

*Circular email for use for recruitment of volunteers for study ref: 12/13-72 approved by Education and Management Research Ethics Panel at King's College, London.*

I am currently undertaking a PhD at King's College, London. The aim of this research project is to explore the relationship between academics' understanding of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university. Proposed outcomes and benefits are developing insights into:

- the process whereby new entrants to the university develop their professional identity
- the relationship between conceptions of professional identity and attitudes and approaches to academic writing
- the development of strategies to support academics in developing further publications

I am recruiting seven colleagues from the School of Education to collaborate with me on this research project. If you volunteer to take part, you will be invited to participate in the following activities between April and July 2014.

You will be asked to develop a narrative in written and visual form reflecting on the development of your professional identity. You will be asked to participate in an informal conversational interview lasting no more than one hour during which we will discuss your narratives as a starting point for exploring your understanding of your professional identity. You will be invited to work collaboratively with me to review the individual portrait I develop based on your narratives and interview. This collaborative review role will take no more than 30 minutes in total.

If you have any questions or require more information about this study please contact Amanda Roberts, The University of Hertfordshire, School of Education, de Havilland campus, Hatfield. AL10 9AB or by email: amanda.roberts@kcl.ac.uk or telephone on 01707 285724. You are under no obligation to reply to this email, however if you choose to, participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw at any point up until the 1 May 2014.

## Appendix 2

### Step 2: Information sheet for potential participants

#### 2: INFORMATION SHEET FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

*REC Reference Number: 12/13-72*



**Title of study: The relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university**

I would like to invite you to participate in this original research project. This is being funded by The University of Hertfordshire School of Education through its financial support of my PhD studies. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The aim of this research project is to explore the relationship between academics' understanding of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university. Proposed outcomes and benefits are developing insights into:

- the process whereby new entrants to the university develop their professional identity
- the relationship between conceptions of professional identity and attitudes and approaches to academic writing
- the development of strategies to support academics in developing further publications

I am recruiting seven colleagues from the School of Education at the University of Hertfordshire to collaborate with me on this research project.

You will be asked to prepare a narrative in written form, prior to our first meeting, reflecting on the development of your professional identity. At our first meeting, you will be asked to create a collage which reflects your current professional identity. You will be asked to articulate your thinking as you create this collage. You will then be asked to participate in an informal conversational interview during which we will discuss your narratives.

Our conversational interview will last for approximately 60 minutes and will take place on the de Havilland campus, in a room booked for the sole purpose of the research. With your permission, a video recording will be made of the creation of your collage. This video will be anonymised at the point of recording and will be deleted after analysis. Our conversation will be audio-recorded, to allow us to think about what we say at a later date. The audio-recording of the interview will be anonymised at the point of recording and will be deleted following transcription.

Photographs will be taken of your final collage. These will also be anonymised at the point of collection. Photographs may be included in the final thesis. Originals will then be destroyed.

Your written story, your account of your collage and the conversational interview will be transcribed and analysed and a draft portrait will be developed. You will be asked to work with me to review the portrait as part of a collaborative process of data interpretation. Our conversation will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. This audio-file will be anonymised at the point of recording. Your comments will be used to refine your portrait. Portraits will be constructed in such a way as to maintain your anonymity. This collaborative review role will take no more than 30 minutes.

Data will be fed back to the School of Education in the form of anonymised portraits or extracts from these. In any subsequent publications or conference papers, every realistic attempt will be made to ensure that the anonymity of research participants is preserved.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part in this research project or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. You may withdraw your data from the project at any time up until your data are transcribed from 1 May 2014 for use in my PhD thesis. You may withdraw your data from any presentations to the School of Education or wider university at any point prior to the presentations.

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details: Amanda Roberts, The University of Hertfordshire, School of Education, de Havilland campus, Hatfield, AL10 9AB or by email: [amanda.roberts@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:amanda.roberts@kcl.ac.uk) or telephone on 01707 285724.

## Appendix 3

### Step 4: Consent form for participants

#### 4: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Please complete this form after you have read the *Information Sheet* about the research.

REC Reference Number: 12/13-72



**Title of study: The relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university**

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the *Information Sheet* or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

Please tick  
or initial

- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researcher involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to 1 May 2014 for the purposes of use in a PhD thesis and at any point for purposes of presentations to the School of Education or wider university.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with the terms of the UK Data Protection Act 1998.
- I consent to a video recording being made of my collage preparation and a digital audio-recording being made of my interviews, on the understanding that these recordings, and any still images taken, will be transcribed and then deleted.
- The information you have submitted will be published as a PhD thesis and in subsequent journal articles. These will be available to you on request. Please note that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify you from any publications.

☐☐☐☐

**Participant's Statement:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above, the *Information Sheet* about the project and the *Guidance sheet on preparing narratives* and understand what the research study involves.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Statement:**

I, Amanda Roberts, confirm that I have carefully explained the nature and demands of the proposed research to the participant.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4

### Step 5: Further information on production of narratives

#### 5: GUIDANCE ON PREPARING YOUR NARRATIVES

*REC Reference Number: 12/13-72*



**Title of study: The relationship between academics' conceptions of their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing in a School of Education in a post-1992 university**

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in my research. I would like us to explore together how you see your professional identity. I would us to explore this in a number of ways. These are:

- through the writing of a story
- through the production of a collage
- through a conversational interview about your collage and story
- through a discussion of a portrait which I will produce, based on your story, your collage and on our conversational interview about them

#### **Your story**

I would like you to write a story about how you came to be the professional you are today. You can write a very short story, a medium length story or a long story. You might want to consider such aspects as your career trajectory, what values underpin choices you have made, personal or institutional influences on your career path or anything else which illuminates how you came to be the professional you are today.

If you type your story, please email it to me so that I can read it prior to our first interview - [amanda.roberts@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:amanda.roberts@kcl.ac.uk) . If your story is handwritten, please give it to me prior to our first interview.

#### **Your collage**

At the start of our meeting time together I would like you to make a collage showing how you see your professional identity at this moment in time.

In thinking about your professional identity you may want to consider what you think is most important in what you do at work, the values which underpin your activity, what you aspire to achieve in your work, how you see yourself as a professional, how you think others see you and so on.

By ‘make a collage’ I mean the activity of putting together a number of materials, for example, paper, ribbon, pebbles etc. to make a representation of how you see your professional identity. You can stick these materials onto paper or just place them down, to allow you to move them around as your collage develops.

I will give you some materials to make your collage with. However, you could bring your own materials instead if you wish or use a mixture of the materials I supply and your own. I would like you to talk to me about what you are representing in your collage as you develop it.

### **Our conversational interview**

Our conversational interview will focus on an exploration of your collage and your story. I may also ask you some additional questions, depending on where our exploration of your collage and story takes us.

Making your collage and the follow-up conversational interview should take around 60 minutes in total.

### **Our discussion of your portrait**

I will use the information you have shared with me through your story, collage and through talking with me to develop an individual portrait. I will then ask you to review this portrait with me and may ask you some follow-up questions.

This discussion should take approximately 30 minutes.

I will contact you shortly by email to arrange an appropriate time for our first meeting. If you have any questions or require more information about this study in the meantime, please do contact me using the following contact details: Amanda Roberts, The University of Hertfordshire, School of Education, de Havilland campus, Hatfield, AL10 9AB or by email: [amanda.roberts@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:amanda.roberts@kcl.ac.uk) or telephone on 01707 2857



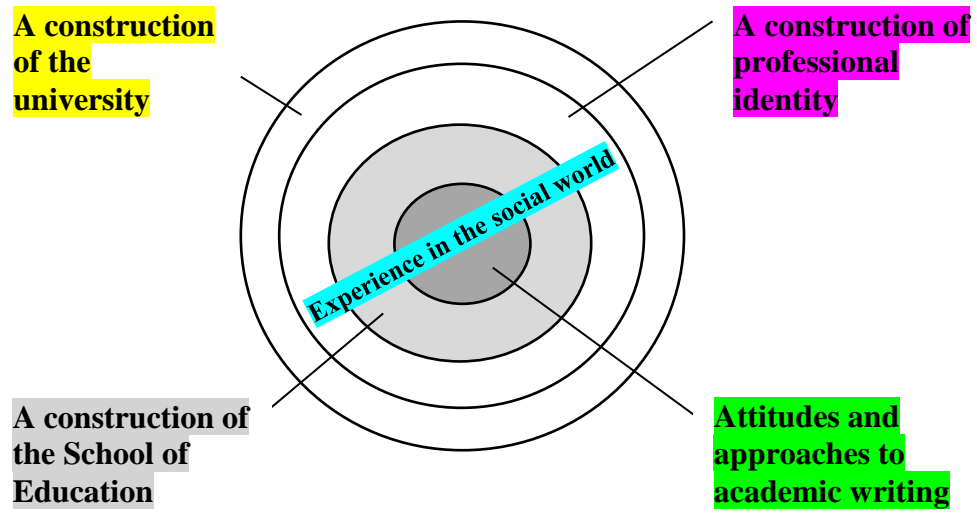
## Appendix 5

### Step 6: Stage 1 data collection – informal conversational interview prompts

| Key research question   | Stage 1 interview prompts   |
|---|---|
| <p>What meaning do academics in a School of Education in a post-1992 university make of their university and School of Education?</p> <p>What influences this meaning-making?</p>             | <p>Tell me more about the university you work in.</p> <p>Tell me more about the School of Education you work in.</p> <p>Why might you see it in this way?</p>                         |
| <p>What meaning do academics make of their professional identity?</p> <p>What influences this meaning-making?</p>   | <p>How would you describe the main aspects of your professional identity?</p> <p>Tell me something about what this identity is based on.</p> <p>Why might you see it in this way?</p> |
| <p>What meaning do academics make of the practices of research and academic writing?</p> <p>What influences this meaning-making?</p>  | <p>What do research and academic writing mean to you?</p> <p>Why might you see it in this way?</p>  |
| <p>What is the relationship between the way academics see their professional identity and their attitudes and approaches to academic writing?</p> <p>What influences this meaning-making?</p> | <p><i>This is an interpretive research question and will not be addressed directly by questioning.</i></p>  |


## Appendix 6

### Step 9: Coding key for influencing factors



## Appendix 7

### Step 9: Example of completion of column 3 of analytical grid; Participant 1; collage section

| 1 Screen shot   | 2 Text: whole transcript, divided into segments  | 3 AR commentary on transcription   | 4 Explan. concept code | 5 Lit. ref. | 6 Point made | 7 AR commentary on relevance of literature | 8 Data ref. |
|---|--|--|------------------------|-------------|--------------|--|-------------|
| Ref. SS1.1<br> | An interesting bit – I have already moved on because I would start with how people see me now but actually what I want to start with is how I see my role.                               | Identity as a real concept to people – who I am has meaning when applied to a professional role. |                        |             |              |  | 1C1         |
|   | I'm going to put this down because I picked this up a few minutes ago and it really made me think about who I am in my role and about the university.                                    | Connection between artistic metaphors and consideration of role.                                 |                        |             |              |  | 1C2         |
|   | And each of these are the little members of staff and they are little buds with lots of potential for doing brilliant things in learning and teaching ... but they are closed off buds.. | University as shutting off people rather than giving them life                                   |                        |             |              |  | 1C3         |

## **Appendix 8**

### **Step 11: Researcher and participants collaboratively review draft portraits**


#### **Draft portrait of Olwen's professional identity**



#### **Participant commentary**

Does anything come to mind as you look at this representation of your professional identity? If so, please note any thoughts below.

What is your reaction to this draft portrait? Please note any thoughts in the right hand column overleaf.

| Draft portrait written by Amanda   | Participant's commentary |
|--|--------------------------|
| <p>Olwen joined the university 20 years ago. She has published numerous articles and book chapters over a 25 year period.</p> <p><b><i>The context of the university</i></b></p> <p>Olwen's love is the development of learning and teaching. On joining the university, she was surprised at the lack of obvious focus on learning and teaching within the organisation. This sense of surprise has developed over time into deep disappointment in the institutional positioning of learning and teaching and its development. Olwen sees herself as holding an oppositional view to the organisation regarding how to build sustainable success in learning and teaching. She favours the long-term building of openness and trust rather than a quick-fix approach which often <i>'looks good on the surface but is dust underneath'</i> (1S22). This view of the university as promising much but delivering little was well-illustrated in the choice of a broken branch as the centre-piece of her collage.</p> <div> <p>Ref. SS1C.2</p>  </div> <p>The buds on the branch symbolise the potential of staff for developing learning and teaching. The buds should be nourished, in Olwen's view, by the senior management team of the university, represented by the main branch.</p> <p>However, this branch is broken. It is disconnected in some way from the staff and students it should serve and its nurturing, developmental potential is therefore curtailed.</p> <p>Instead of an interest in individuals then, Olwen sees the university as focusing on systems and procedures, rules and regulations which can dominate working practices. Olwen sees this as inhibiting change, with procedures, once decided upon, being unchanged over time despite shifting patterns of student intake. Moreover, this focus on an instrumental way of working suggests a de-valuing of anything which cannot be measured.</p> |                          |

In her collage, Olwen depicts this tension through the contrasting images of the blue straight line of university procedures and the more organic collection of staff clustered around her at the on the right of the collage.

Ref. SS1C.10



### ***The importance of reading and writing***

Reading and writing have always been a source of delight, excitement and nourishment for Olwen. Perhaps because of this positive relationship with the written word, Olwen began to engage in academic writing early in her career. Whilst still working as a teacher of the deaf she responded to a call to practitioners to write for a newly-launched national association of professionals working with language-impaired children (1S7) and was delighted to have her article published.

The link to practice continues to provide the imperative to write for Olwen, who views teaching as '*an intellectual activity*' (1I2). Other rationales, such as organisational or School pressures to write in isolation from an authentic purpose, are more easily rejected (1S10). Olwen does not reject the function of writing as a conduit for knowledge-creation within the academy however. She responds very positively to opportunities to present the results of authentic writing at conferences for example (1S11), where practitioners have the opportunity to build knowledge collaboratively.

Colleagues however, do not necessarily subscribe to Olwen's view of the symbiosis of reading, writing and practice. This can lead to an undervaluing of reading and writing within the School (1C15) and a frustration in Olwen that she cannot always find the opportunities to influence or support the development of learning and teaching practice at institutional or School level (1S16).

For Olwen, such support is not simply about the development of skills but of enabling others to be '*the people they aspire to be*' (1S18).

***A developing professional identity***

Reading and writing are then, for Olwen, linked to who she is within the university. Despite viewing her professional identity as a process of development, a commitment to practice and practice development, underpinned by the clear moral purpose of achieving social good, has been a constant theme in Olwen's professional life (1S4). As a young professional, teaching enabled her to effect change in children's life chances even within an organisational structure which was limiting. Olwen sees this rooting of teaching in moral purpose to be mirrored in the work of many of her colleagues within the School of Education (1I18), with only lip service paid to more managerialist university systems and procedures which on the surface seem to drive organisational policy and practice. In this she sees herself as in accord with her colleagues.

Ref. SS1C.8



This positioning is reflected in her situating herself (represented by the glass prism) at a distance from the senior management team (represented by the main branch) and nearer to her colleagues (represented by the pebbles), despite her leadership role (1C6).

However, Olwen does notice differences of view between her and some of her colleagues around the place of research and writing in practice development. She was aware that some colleagues and leaders in her early teaching posts held an anti-intellectual stance and feels that such a view may retain some currency within the School of Education. Teaching can be seen to be the primary purpose for some.

Such a view can cause difficulties for those who wish to develop the research aspect of their work. They may be seen by colleagues who are more teaching-focused as less professional, as the imperative to support student learning seems dissipated by the demands of other scholarship activities (1C22).

Although the wider university is positioned very differently, offering '*brownie points*' (1I22) to those who publish, this too is problematic. Here the problem arises through the lack of connectivity between the institution's understanding of the impetus for writing and the individual's own view of the relative value of the activities which make up their role. Olwen's belief is that, for many colleagues within the School, developing as more effective teachers trumps developing the writing aspects of their role (1I18). For Olwen, such standpoints are not just about choosing one activity over another but about identity itself, about having a view of oneself as a teacher for years and then changing and being '*some other person*' (1I22).



## Appendix 9

### Step 13: Coding key for explanatory concepts (initials)

#### A construction of the university

*Master explanatory concepts:*

- Figured worlds (FW)
- Academic scholarships (AS)
- Structure and agency (S/A)

*Subsidiary explanatory concepts:*

- Reflexivity (R)
- Self-efficacy (SE)

#### A construction of the School of Education

*Master explanatory concepts:*

- Figured worlds (FW)
- Capital (C)
- Habitus (H)
- Restricted and extended professionalism (R/EP)

*Subsidiary explanatory concepts:*

- Legitimate peripheral participation (LPP)

#### A construction of professional identity

*Master explanatory concepts:*

- Identity fluidity (IF)
- Discoursal identity (DID)
- Affinity identity (AI)
- Restricted and extended professionalism (R/EP)

*Subsidiary explanatory concepts:*

- Disciplinary identity (DI)
- Moral purpose (MP)
- Authenticity (A)

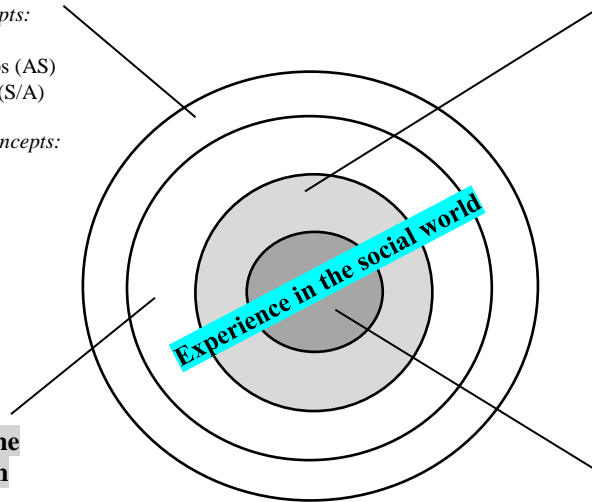
#### Attitudes and approaches to academic writing

*Master explanatory concepts:*

- Academic socialisation (AS)
- Academic literacies (AL)


*Subsidiary explanatory concepts:*

- Socialisation (S)
- Nourishment (N)
- Reading/writing/practice link (RWP)
- Academic scholarships (ASC)
- Literacy as enquiry (LAE)
- Self-development (SD)



## Appendix 10

### Step 13: Example of completion of explanatory concepts and literature sections (columns 4 - 7) of analytical grid; Participant 1; collage section

| 1 Screen shot   | 2 Text: whole transcript, divided into segments  | 3 AR commentary on transcription  | 4 Explan. concept code | 5 Lit. ref.   | 6 Point made   | 7 AR commentary on relevance of literature  | 8 Data ref. |
|---|--|---|------------------------|---------------|--|---|-------------|
| Ref. SS1.1<br> | An interesting bit – I have already moved on because I would start with how people see me now but actually what I want to start with is how I see my role.                               | Identity as a real concept to people – who I am has meaning when applied to a professional role | (IF)                   |               |  |   | 1C1         |
|   | I'm going to put this down because I picked this up a few minutes ago and it really made me think about who I am in my role and about the university.                                    | Connection between artistic metaphors and considerations of role.                               | (R)                    |               |  |   | 1C2         |
|   | And each of these are the little members of staff and they are little buds with lots of potential for doing brilliant things in learning and teaching ... but they are closed off buds.. | University as shutting off people rather than giving them life                                  | (S/A)<br>(MP)          | Peters (2013) | Creative labour rather than estranged labour if anyone can create knowledge – challenges idea of people as human capital for the production of wealth etc. | Important for academics who see themselves as the work horses. Does this give them an opportunity to be creative? | 1C3         |